



Dynamics of Cultural Survival of Kalasha

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In the Footsteps of Halfdan Siiger

Danish Research in Central Asia



Editors

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– Danish Research in Central Asia

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Ulrik Høj Johnsen, Armin W. Geertz,
Svend Castenfeldt and Peter B. Andersen

MOESGAARD MUSEUM

In the Footsteps of Halfdan Siiger

– Danish Research in Central Asia

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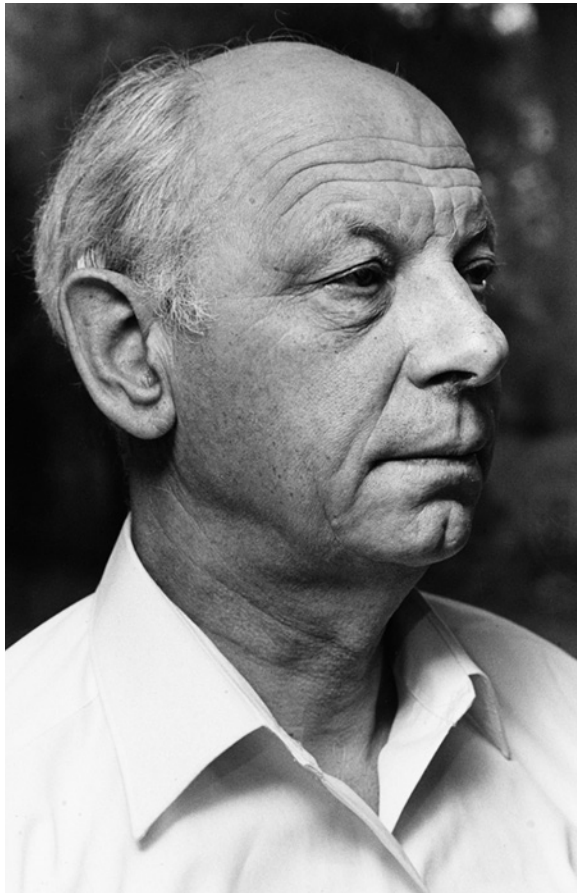
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*Ulrik Høj Johnsen, Armin W. Geertz,
Svend Castenfeldt and Peter B. Andersen,
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1. Introduction

Ulrik Høj Johnsen



Halfdan Siiger, 1911-1999

The social sciences and humanities are in a perpetual state of change and development, with new fields of research constantly unfolding before our eyes. Many different facets of human life are being discovered at a pace which it would have been difficult to foresee in 1979, when Halfdan Siiger (Cand. Theol., Mag. Art., 1911-1999), the founding Professor of the Institute for the History of Religions at Aarhus University, chose to retire. Developments since would surely have pleased him. Year after year, ever more students have gone deeper and further into the History of Religions where, for over two decades, he founded, built up and guided the discipline – but also in other related disciplines such as linguistics, ethnography and social anthropology. Using unexpected new methods, the disciplines offer new perspectives on the world. Altogether this would surely have been a delight for Siiger, as a scholar who wished that the disciplines would continue to develop into the distant future.

Halfdan Siiger was the product of another age and another research tradition than that of today. The mere fact that there were a lot fewer scholars in the 1960s and 1970s meant that experts from different disciplines came together in different ways than now. Aside from that, Siiger was part of a tradition when the questions posed were more general and larger in many ways, dealing with mankind and its development. These were questions which could not be answered within the limits of a single discipline. As our publication shows, Siiger and his dedication was, and continues to be, of great importance for scholars working in different disciplines where in recent decades it would have been useful if there had been more cooperation across the boundaries of the disciplines.

The expedition

For Siiger – like Lennart Edelberg, Knud Paludan and many others – the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia (3. DECA) under the direction of Henning Haslund-Christensen (1896-1948) was the platform for his later career. The expedition, which began in 1947 and continued through 1950, was also the last of the major Danish expeditions. The national project in grand style was to throw light on the blank spaces of the large-scale maps of Asia while placing Danish research and museums on the world map by means of a vast programme of field projects and collections of objects for the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. The interdisciplinary nature of the expedition was in many ways its hallmark, and this interdisciplinarity may well have been inspired by Haslund's encounter with the great Swedish explorer Sven Hedin. Haslund had worked for Hedin as caravan leader during three years in Mongolia with Hedin's Sino-Swedish Expedition in 1927-32. Hedin's expedition numbered hundreds of men and was known as "the wandering university" (Braae, 2007:77). Beyond that, the idea of a team with diverse competencies and a common goal will have appealed to Haslund who was educated as an officer in the Danish army. The linguist Kaare Grønbech (Dr. Phil., 1902-57) was the expedition's "scientific leader" who worked closely with a board of scientists, among whom was Birket-Smith. Grønbech also participated in Haslund's Second Danish Expedition to Central Asia in Mongolia in 1938-39 together with archaeologist Werner Jacobsen (1914-79). Haslund's third expedition to Central Asia was, therefore, in many ways a continuation and expansion of his previous work, which meant that a substantial amount of artifacts and knowledge was brought back to Denmark in the 1930s. A publication on Haslund's first two expeditions to Central Asia is about to be published by curator at the National Museum of Denmark, Christel Braae.

The war years prevented Haslund from attaining the goal of a third, follow-up expedition. The time was subsequently used to register the materials from the first two expeditions. At the same time, a hitherto large team of scientists was assembled for the coming third expedition. It was only after the world began to open up again after the dark years of the war that it was even conceivable to think about crossing the borders in the name of research. On the horizon, people like Haslund and the men around him, began to see the possibilities of exploring and researching "the wrinkled face of Asia", as Lennart Edelberg (Cand. Mag, 1915-1981) would later formulate it poetically in the title of a book (Edelberg 1961).

Professionally, it was the Director of the Ethnographic Collection at the National Museum of Denmark, Birket-Smith (Dr. Phil. et Scient., 1893-1977), who supported the expedition, together with Kaare Grønbech. From 1943 Birket-Smith was also Siiger's superior at the National Museum.

Birket-Smith's paramount professional interest was the diffusion of culture: the temporal and spatial spread of cultural traits. This concerned major features of human life together with the history and development of humanity. His outlook was "global", to use a word current in our own times. The way to this global view passed through the "purest" forms of culture possible. In an unpretentious brief folder entitled *Læs med Plan* ("Read with a plan") from 1953, Siiger wrote that the goal of the "Study of Religion [was to] expose the religious life of humanity as far back in time as it can be followed, and as far as it can be traced across the earth". For Birket-Smith, all peoples were seen as actors in a common story and, by means of historical comparisons between cultures, patterns in the spread of cultural characteristics would be thrown into relief. The title of Birket-Smith's most important work was *Kulturens Veje* ("The Paths of Culture", 1941-42). It is hardly surprising that Birket-Smith's theoretical programme was likewise a guide for Siiger's contacts with three different peoples in Asia: the Kalasha, living in the easternmost parts of today's Northwest Frontier Province in Pakistan; the Lepcha in Sikkim; and the Bodos in Assam, India. The plan was that Siiger would travel to Tibet to study Tibetan Buddhist beliefs and way of life, but even though every effort was undertaken to try, violent political and military events resulting from the Chinese invasion of Tibet ruled this out. So Siiger's fieldwork took him to Assam where, using the Christian Santal Mission as a base, he pursued a smaller project dedicated to the Bodos in particular.

The underlying goal of Siiger's work was to look behind foreign influences in the cultures and identify "original cultural traits", in other words, those traits which could hint at the possibly common prehistorical point of origin or fix point. This could have been a unique aspect in the pre-Buddhist conceptions from traditional religions in the Himalayan regions, or cultural features in the Hindu Kush which leads us back to the original Indo-European population. Within this conceptual framework, it was natural that archaeology, ethnography, linguistics, and even disciplines like geography and biology contributed to the project. Individually, each of the different disciplines had something to offer, and together, they complemented each other. It is hardly an accident that Siiger, who originally earned a degree in theology and later became a scholar of religion, called himself an "ethnographer" or

“religio-ethnographer”. The designation appears to be correct. On the expeditions, Siiger’s methodology was ethnographic, and he felt comfortable with it: long term fieldwork carried out in the style and meeting the standards of participatory observation set by the trail-blazing anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski several decades before the Haslund expedition. In order to understand the local beliefs and way of life, you had to mingle with the people, observing *what* they do and *how* they do it, in order to develop an understanding of *why* they do what they do. In the folder entitled *Læs med Plan* (“Read with a plan”) from 1953, Siiger writes, “It is the task of the Study of Religion to investigate and describe the contents and history of the various religions seen in the context of the rest of cultural life”. Phenomena such as belief cannot be isolated if the field worker does not assess religious practices within the entire social context. Understanding religious practices requires understanding their contexts, and in this sense, this includes phenomena which strictly speaking require other disciplinary competencies, focusing for example on social behavioural patterns, gender roles, housing distribution, economy and much more.

It was, by the way, far from certain for the scientist that the observed people themselves think about why they do what they do or why they choose to use certain words. It was and still is the role of the scientist to analyze the local and put that into a larger historical or theoretical context. Scientific methods have not really changed that much on this basic point. It is true that in anthropology there is a great deal more stress placed on the idea that knowledge is created in the interplay between the investigator and the informant. The latter has drawn greater attention at the beginning of the 21st century than was the case 60 years ago.

In 1940, Birket-Smith published a book entitled *Vi Mennesker* (“We humans”) which is for the greatest part a review of the physical features – height, head shape, breadth of the nose, beard growth, eye and hair colour, eye form, jaw formation etc. – of the various races. The idea was that one could thereby understand common origins and migration patterns and the spread of culture. This led to a task in the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, which some of the members of the expedition did not consider productive to their own research, to put it bluntly. This task consisted of anthropological measurements which were undertaken using a scheme devised by Dr. Kurt Brøste (Cand. Med., 1902-54) the Director of the Anthropological Institute of the University of Copenhagen. The members of the expedition received this form in order to fill it out in the field, and this meant taking measurements of the heads of the living informants, and identifying eye colours and form, breadth of the nose, skin colour, etc. In

the 1966 report *Anthropological Researches From the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia*, it clearly emerges that the only person who actually performed all the measurements according to the plan was Prince Peter who came into contact with thousands of fleeing Tibetans in Kalimpong on the Indian border with Tibet. 5000 anthropological measurements were sent back to Dr. Brøste in Copenhagen from Prince Peter. Siiger carried out 167 measurements among the Kalash, 207 among the Lepcha, and 170 among the Bodos (Halfdan Siiger 1966).

The anthropological measurements were the result of evolutionary theories dating back to the end of the 19th century. Birket-Smith, however, was a Romantic, as opposed to his teacher, H.P. Steensby, who was a Modernist. Romantics were not interested in the rationalism behind modernist evolutionary schemas. They were, as mentioned, interested in the diffusion and history of cultural traits that together bring an understanding of a certain culture’s history.

Siiger collected only a percentage of the anthropometric measurements from the Kalasha, Lepcha and Bodo. As a collector of artifacts, however, he was more successful. Necessarily, the expedition had to bring back a collection of representative objects as outreach to the broader Danish public, a basic for Birket-Smith and the National Museum of Denmark. With regard to the collections of the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia in general and to Siiger’s collections in particular, it is significant that Siiger and his colleagues broke with surveying collections of items so characteristic for Olufsen’s expedition as described in the chapter by Esther Fihl. They moved towards a more inclusive collection of materials which, when processed, would allow them to give much more reflected and polyphone presentations of the cultures of the people they collected their materials from. Siiger continually sought to connect the collections of physical items with their use, and their users. From the collections stored in Danish museums and his publication on the Lepchas, it seems that he refined this approach from his first large scale collections among the Kalasha in Chitral to the collections among the Lepchas in Sikkim. This allowed him to let specific informants give voice to myths, legends and rituals among the different peoples. As it is evident, his collections allow for the presentation of myths and legends of the peoples he met and to carry out secondary studies down to the level of his informants’ positions in their respective societies.

Siiger began working with the collected material immediately after his return to Denmark in 1950, when he was appointed museum curator at the National Museum with special responsibility for large parts of the Asian collections. This



Halfdan Siiger among the Lepcha. Sikkim, 1949.

position became available as C. G. Feilberg (Dr. Phil., 1894-1972), who had written a dissertation on *La Tente Noire*, the black tents of the tribes of Luristan in Iran, was appointed professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Copenhagen. Siiger maintained the position of curator until 1960 when he was offered a professorship in the History of Religions at Aarhus University.

Results

Among Siiger's tasks in the 1950s was the presentation of the Asian collections at the National Museum to the public and scholars. This included exhibitions, articles and lectures. Research on the material was the starting point for using the material to communicate with others, and Siiger's research was among the decisive reasons underlying the decision to name him professor at Aarhus University in 1960. Following the appointment, his research was stimulated by new possibilities and impulses, but teaching and the administrative work of founding a university discipline also set limits, which is probably the reason for his relatively short list of publications. The material that Siiger collected during the period of 1947-50 has only been partly published.

The Lepcha material is clearly the best published: two volumes entitled *The Lepchas. Culture and Religion of a Himalayan People* were published in 1967, but the third, concluding, volume never appeared in Siiger's lifetime. The Kalasha material can only be regarded as partially published and only in the form of articles, courses and his "Preliminary Report" of 1956. Up to his death, Siiger worked on a comprehensive volume on the old Kalasha culture. We will return to this. The Bodo materials are partly published, as Peter B. Andersen and Santosh K. Soren recently published Siiger's manuscript on the Bodo in *The Bodo of Assam: Revisiting a Classical Study from 1950* (Copenhagen 2015).

Administrative duties were not the whole story however. It is striking that it is the concluding analyses of the Lepcha and Kalasha material which are missing. It could be that Siiger was looking for analytical concepts which could link the three field studies together into a single framework which was comprehensive in the sense of joining "global" and "understanding". This is, of course, just speculation, but there is evidence in support of this interpretation. This is hardly surprising – and in fact on the contrary only logical – if Siiger conceived of his three field studies as being interrelated. The geographical distances separating the Kalasha in the Hindu Kush, the Lepchas in Sikkim and the Bodos in Assam are great. Nevertheless, the contours of a plan emerge which is in direct extension of not only Haslund's global vision of the expedition as an entirety to itself, but also of Birket-Smith's project: the discovery of the pure cultural traits which were spread through patterns of migration.

Concerning the choice of sites for his field-work, in the *Preliminary Report: Ethnological Field-Research in Chitral, Sikkim and Assam* (1956), Siiger wrote that, "The mountain cultures in these areas [Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, ed.] attracted my attention in particular because it seemed probable to find old, unknown ways of life still flourishing in many of the remote, secluded mountain valleys, and because these cultures might retain many old traits of Indian and Central Asian influences". If by means of identifying the ancient features of the three population groups in their cultures, beliefs and languages across a large geographical region, they could be traced back to a common origin or starting-point, this would be a real scientific advance, which would have drawn international attention. Not least if this revealed a starting point for the Indo-European civilization.

However, as the conclusions never came, Siiger must have been missing something. It is possible that he was looking for a third category. In 1993 Siiger pub-

lished the article *Small Functional Items and Regeneration of Society. Dough figurines from the Kalash people of Chitral, Northern Pakistan* in collaboration with ethnographer and medieval archaeologist Cand. Mag. Mytte Fentz and ethnographer Cand. Phil. Svend Castenfeldt, which points in that direction. At the time, Siiger had not published on the Kalasha for almost 30 years, and it seems as if the collaboration with Fentz and Castenfeldt had sparked his wish to publish the Kalasha material. Since his field work in the late 1940s, a number of anthropologists had conducted fieldwork among the Kalasha (among others Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1989, 1991, 1996; and Loudes & Lievre 1987) who, inspired by recent theoretical and methodological insights, had published analyses of different aspects of the culture and social life of the Kalasha. One senses that Siiger found resonance with his own Kalasha material in the analyses mentioned in the article from 1993, and the subsequent wish to complete his own analyses. Especially the classical dichotomy between male/female, pure/impure, sacred/profane etc. emerged in the article. Although Siiger never delivered a decisive conclusion on this topic, one senses his search for a third category which could transcend perhaps even the perspective of the professionally recognized dichotomy approach.

In the broad historical brushstroke, which Birket-Smith strove to paint with the inestimable help of the members of the expedition, Siiger lacked a solution to the “complicated Asiatic cultural problems” as he noted in the quote cited above. It is possible that this is also a problem in the central dichotomies used in the study of religion. Regardless of whether this question is justified or not, the need for further research is imperative to the highest degree. And beyond the research tradition and the vision which I have tried to sketch here, it is natural that a trans-disciplinary approach is required so that the pieces can fall into place, or, indeed, merely to put all the pieces on the scientific table in a new way. The reason why Siiger’s material is relevant now is perhaps that the relevant academic disciplines are now ready to address the same questions that Siiger raised, because we live in an age where precisely the phenomena he actually encountered and investigated (diversity and moderate conformity) are themselves presented as model communities in a world which is imposing modern uniformity on all individual civilizations. There is, in other words, a potential, which also Siiger saw, but was unable to achieve, to make a contribution to culture, universalism and origins. Fortunately, this publication shows that contemporary scholars are not only working with Siiger’s material, but also are able to approach some of the important conclusions that his material offers.

The context

Unfortunately, I never met Halfdan Siiger personally when he was at Moesgaard during the last years of his life, nor did I have a particularly close knowledge of his work or its significance for ethnographers and anthropologists. It was only in the summer of 2010 when Siiger’s successor at Aarhus University Professor Armin W. Geertz, a historian of religions, Associate Professor at the University of Copenhagen Peter B. Andersen and ethnographer Svend Castenfeldt invited me to join a working group to organize a conference in late 2011 to mark the centenary of Siiger’s birth. At the same time, I became particularly interested in the collection of materials which Siiger put together and which now form part of the Ethnographic Collections at the Moesgaard Museum where I work. The efforts of the working group eventually culminated in the conference on “Halfdan Siiger and Danish Central Asian Research” which took place in November 2011 at the National Museum of Denmark and the Department of Cross-cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, organized jointly by Aarhus University, the University of Copenhagen, the National Museum of Denmark and the Moesgaard Museum. For three days, more than 70 individuals discussed the broad spectrum of Siiger’s work. Common to all of us was not only the interest in Siiger’s work, but also the realization that for many of the participants, their own work can be seen as the direct results of Siiger’s own projects.

The title of the conference reflected the ambition of the working group to focus on a great and important scholar. It became clear, however, that the recognition of Siiger’s legacy is not just a celebration of the man. As this publication indicates, the work of Siiger is still very much alive and maintains its relevance. A number of different researchers, senior and junior alike, have picked up the torch carried by Siiger. The conference was thus encouraging and stimulating. Researchers from many countries representing different disciplines met in the context that Siiger’s research created. In many ways, Siiger stands out as a “founding father”, particularly for the discipline of the study of religion in Aarhus, but also other disciplines. Siiger was a member of a group of men who established something very special. That group was assembled by Haslund at the National Museum in the 1940s, when Kaj Birket-Smith was Keeper of the museum’s ethnographic collection. In each their own way, these men were an inspiration for the specialist disciplines and environments in which they worked. As individuals and researchers they were different, but as scientists they became colleagues and often good

friends, and out of their cooperation they brought new inspiration to their different fields of study. And it was precisely here that Siiger's work and research tradition bears an important message for modern researchers. Younger researchers live and work today in a world characterized by increasing specialization, both in terms of tradition and research context. Siiger himself stressed that he as a researcher "stood on the shoulders of giants". Today many would certainly gain from constructive teaching, open in terms of method and discipline, which was the way things were in Siiger's time. This was and still is potentially stimulating and intellectually fertilizing. Siiger and those like him are not scientific dinosaurs over whom one sighs nostalgically on the rare occasions when they are brought to light. They were shaping those scientific traditions of which we are a part, and hopefully we will be able to pass the torch on to coming generations.

With Siiger's death in 1999, essential parts of his material remained unfinished. During the decade up to his death, Siiger was in close contact with ethnographer Svend Castenfeldt who carefully and accurately sorted, registered and archived the ethnographic research archives in Moesgaard. The importance of this work cannot be adequately underscored. It involved cardboard boxes filled with piles of paper, books, and published articles on the one hand, and usable outlines with catalogued contents in the archives with cross-indexing and references on the other. Castenfeldt's work thus made Siiger's unfinished and disorganized field-notes and research materials available to scholars interested in his work. Castenfeldt therefore made it possible for others to carry on, using Siiger's materials.

Most of those scholars were present at the conference in November 2011, the results of which are presented in this publication. This collection of papers confirms both that Siiger's research and research tradition live on and also that the work is still far from finished. More effort is required. Happily, there are excellent colleagues carrying it onwards so that hope grows, although the paths are seldom paved and easy. Among the significant tasks remaining is to draw conclusions that Siiger did not himself manage to do. This could involve an analytical-theoretical concept tying Siiger's material from the different field studies together. In a very succinct text prepared as a guide for open university teaching in 1950, Siiger wrote that "Linguistics has demonstrated that the Black Kafirs [the Kalash Kafirs, ed.] speak an Indian language and physical anthropological investigations seem to suggest that the people are of a European type, but many features concerning the origins and history (etc.) of the people offer complicated Asiatic cultural problems which have not hitherto been resolved". Siiger was clearly on the scent of

something after his return to Denmark in 1950, but still bearing the preliminary conclusion that the solution was not yet found. Hopefully it will come.

As should be clear to readers, the researchers who have contributed to this publication have very different approaches to Siiger and his material. Some did not work directly with Siiger's materials but rather with questions which can throw light on Siiger's work either thematically or regionally. In the contributions by those who have used Siiger's materials in their research, one finds a few openings which could be relevant to, or used in, further research. And of course some readers may have questions or ideas which may persist after they have read the publication. There are, for example, openings which take us back to the dichotomies of purity/impurity. This was a classic analytical view in the history of religions and with Mary Douglas's trail-blazing ethnographic work, *Purity and Danger* (1966). It also became an analytical approach which resonated in anthropology. Siiger's thoughts about this dichotomy are clear in the Lepcha and Kalasha material.

The chapters

The chapters in this publication reflect the many different perspectives on Halfdan Siiger and Danish research in Central Asia as presented at the conference in 2011. After the conference, the authors were requested to submit revised papers for this volume. The publication can be viewed as a mosaic where the individual parts, each in its own way, illuminate Halfdan Siiger and his life and work in a broad perspective.

The majority of the chapters focus primarily on Siiger as a scholar, the academic context in which he moved and recent Danish research in Central Asia. However, the book begins with Siiger as a person, written by Nina Siiger, the daughter of Halfdan and Inga Bolette Siiger. Nina Siiger's story about her father offers valuable insights into the essential aspects of Siiger's personal and family background. It is a story which recounts what influenced him as a researcher. Such a look at a scholar's personal history is atypical in this context, but it helps our understanding of the background of his choice of discipline and profession. The chapter is presented in both English and Danish (please see the appendix).

As is true with most scholars, Siiger was both a scientist and a family man, and these two "roles" complemented and enriched each other; reciprocally, they both

opened and closed possibilities. One must recall that when Siiger went off on his journey which lasted two and a half years, he had just become the father of twins in addition to his daughter Nina who was four at the time. It was not easy for his wife, Inga Bolette. On the other hand, this was a decisive chance for his career at a time when every father of a family had to stretch means pretty far in order to assure that the family was kept in good shape. With the many letters he loyally sent “from some of the corners of the world”, Nina Siiger’s story offers us a hitherto unpublished glimpse into Siiger’s personal experiences, thoughts and impressions. The story also conveys a daughter’s love and warmth for her father. The 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia was Siiger’s first and only expedition.

The second chapter is written by historian of religion Armin W. Geertz, describing Siiger’s work as professor of the history of religions at Aarhus University. The chapter details the institutional context which led to the foundation of the Institute for the History of Religions, the growth of that institute, the teaching and research carried out there and the general development of the institute since Siiger retired in 1979.

The third chapter is written by ethnographer Esther Fihl and takes us back to the collections of Lieutenant Ole Olufsen’s two expeditions to Central Asia in 1896-1897 and 1898-1899. Olufsen’s expeditions were the first Danish expeditions with scientific ambitions to the same region which would be the object of the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia. Starting with Olufsen’s collections, which are now in the National Museum in Copenhagen, Fihl describes how ethnography was presented for decades in the form of publications and exhibitions which virtually exclusively concentrated on using objects to illustrate the social and cultural aspects of those peoples from whom the objects came. Other aspects – such as why and how, globally seen, any particular individual object was selected as significant, then collected, and finally classified as an ethnographical exponent by the collector or the relevant museum – were generally neglected. Today it is appreciated that there are good reasons for examining this aspect. Fihl stresses that not only the written versions but also the objects themselves in Olufsen’s collections and the criteria of selection can be studied as the concrete expression of a specific time and a special academic environment in Europe. It was to this European context that the objects were brought back from Central Asia, and it was the relations here which determined which texts were composed and which ideas were presented. While presenting the objects in a catalogue which follows Olufsen’s own classification using groups and sub-groups – including Fihl’s own

analyses of the technical details for every one of the items collected – Fihl shows that the objects and collections were not accidentally assembled. Her main point is that the objects collected at that time were chosen and classified by the collectors and museums on the basis of an academic strategy emerging out of the professional ethnographic understanding which prevailed in the 1890s.

After the view of Olufsen’s trail-blazing Danish expeditions into Central Asia just before the close of the 19th century, ethnographer Svend Castenfeldt takes us to the Hindu Kush with Siiger exactly a half century after Ole Olufsen underwent hardships first on horseback and later in the Tsar’s imperial railway carriages across the unwelcoming landscape of Central Asia. Castenfeldt places Siiger in the context of the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia with particular concern for the first field study of the Kalashas whom he reached towards the end of March 1948. Long afterwards, during the period of 1991-1999, the author collaborated closely with Siiger, working on the organization of the enormous material which was, and still is, only partly published. This gave Castenfeldt professional insight into both the man and the scientist Halfdan Siiger; this is a view which serves the reader well, as the chapter describes both Siiger’s research foci and the challenges along the way.

Linguists Peter Bakker and Aymeric Daval-Markussen place the languages and dialects of the Kalashas, Kalashamon, in their linguistic context, dealing with both the language and dialects in the same region and other Asian languages. For the ethnographer who was able to follow the rapid changes in anthropology apart from the questions of the great historical developments, it is very interesting to note that linguistic research, such as that presented by Bakker and Daval-Markussen, has in many respects remained true to the original starting point in Siiger’s research, where their focus is not so much on following cultural traits but the spread of linguistic traditions and genetic materials over thousands of years. The authors touch on what is gradually becoming the old question of how far culture in the Hindu Kush has its origins in, or was under the heavy pressure from, Hellenistic cultural influences. The Kalasha in Chitral and their cousins in Nuristan on the Afghan side of the frontier appear to be completely different from their Muslim neighbours; the use of three-legged tables and the appearance of vines and a real wine culture can indeed be interpreted as a result of Hellenistic influences. This theory was in fact already presented by the Norwegian linguist Georg Morgenstierne as early as the 1930s. Projecting beyond these hypotheses, Bakker and Daval-Markussen conclude that the Kalasha have roots in an Ur-Indo-European people which are revealed through linguistic and genetic studies.

In the chapter by the linguist Jan Heegård and Taj Khan Kalash, a description is presented of present-day Kalasha, more than 60 years after Siiger stayed among them. Siiger was able to observe growing pressure from the surrounding Muslim society on the peoples in the three valleys, Birir, Rumbur and Bumboret with their animistic religion. Currently, it looks as if the struggle for cultural and religious survival has been won by the Kalasha who have developed a renewed self-consciousness and pride in their roots. According to the authors, this was accomplished by setting up a school system where the children learn not just Kalashamon along with a recently introduced Kalasha alphabet, but are also taught about their own cultural identity and history. The authors suggest that the very possibility of creating a historical consciousness in a society where until recently most people were illiterate was to no small degree enabled by Siiger's efforts and collections which offer tangible information going back more than two generations. Kalasha society is thus undergoing a transformation. His materials are themselves playing a role in making the Kalasha conscious of their role as an ethnic minority in the greater society of Muslim-dominated Pakistan.

After having spent nearly nine months amongst the Kalasha in the impassable terrain of the Hindu Kush, Siiger travelled on to the Lepcha in Sikkim towards the end of 1948. In the following chapter, anthropologist Heleen Plaisir describes how Siiger spent several months with the Lepchas in Sikkim and Kalimpong in 1949 and 1950, where he was engaged in a detailed study of traditional Lepcha life and religious traditions. Today, the Lepcha language is regarded as being endangered, and many old Lepcha traditions and religious ceremonies risk falling into oblivion. Siiger's descriptions are of great value for current and future Lepcha studies, in particular his descriptions of those traditions which have now changed or disappeared altogether. Plaisir describes how Siiger's work on the Lepchas of Sikkim and Kalimpong highlights the significance of several unpublished documents in the Siiger archives which are at present being prepared for publication.

Like Plaisir, anthropologists Charisma K. Lepcha and Davide Torri now work with the Lepcha, and their work has taken on entirely different dimensions as a consequence of Siiger's studies in the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia. Many aspects of the Lepcha culture and general situation share common features with the Kalasha. Both are ethnic minorities which, for different reasons, have maintained features of their culture and religion which go back to before the spread of the belief systems currently around them. Amongst the

Lepcha, one finds aspects of pre-Buddhist practices related to beliefs probably shamanistic in origin and sacrifices which have been related to *Bön* religion, which are woven into Buddhism today. The Lepchas have likewise undergone a cultural revival. This was particularly driven by the opposition to a large dam project in a region which bore significant meaning for the Lepchas whose religion, and thus their common identity, is closely bound up with the landscape in which they live. The authors underscore the significance of Siiger's hitherto unpublished materials and refer to these as the most reliable ethnographic source on the Lepchas. However, Siiger's projected third volume on the Lepcha remains to be published.

In the late autumn of 1949, Siiger finished his work in Sikkim and, via Kalimpong, travelled to the Bodo in Assam in north-eastern India. In the following chapter, sociologist of religion Peter B. Andersen and Santosh Soren describe Siiger's third and final season of fieldwork on the expedition, which was to last three months. Siiger gained access to the area with the help of missionaries from the Nordic Christian missions, and the authors relate Siiger's materials to the history of the mission. The struggle for souls enthusiastically pursued by the various Christian missionaries had a very different meaning for the Bodo. Many of Siiger's informants were connected to the missions, and the authors point out the blank spots this left in Siiger's study. There is no doubt that Siiger – as with the Kalasha and the Lepcha – was searching for conceptions of belief and cultural features which could be traced back in time. Andersen and Soren conclude that Siiger actually identified some of these features but that the object of Siiger's collections and research was not really visible in the contemporary world he actually visited so that which Siiger sought was actually long gone. One could term it a kind of archaeology of religion. Siiger's material from the Bodo people remains mainly unpublished.

At the time that Haslund and Siiger met each other in the National Museum of Denmark, Haslund was not just occupied with preparing for the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia. He was also registering and going through the materials which he himself had collected in his two previous expeditions to Central Asia. This material included a Mongolian shaman's costume which is still in the National Museum today. Ethnographer Rolf Gilberg, who for many years was a curator at the museum with responsibility for large parts of the Asiatic collections, offers an extraordinary account of how Haslund acquired the powerfully charged shaman's ritual outfit which no Mongol dared to touch – and thus provided the context for Haslund's chance to acquire the material. Haslund originally planned

to publish a book about the Mongolian shamans' outfits, based amongst other things on this particular costume. However Haslund's plan dissipated due to his untimely and sudden death in Kabul in 1948. It was Siiger who, employed at the National Museum at that time, was entrusted with the task of finishing the book, but for various reasons he did not manage to do so. When Siiger left the National Museum to take on the newly created chair in the history of religions at Aarhus University, the manuscript was left in his drawer. Gilberg tells a tale of how he in his turn, by peculiar paths, was entrusted with the manuscript at the beginning of the 1990s, and how some perceptible and powerful powers (in the other world) seemed to have intervened against all of those who have come into contact with the costume since the 1930s. The work likewise remains unpublished.

The two following chapters, "The Controversial Source of Amu Darya" and "Yurt Material in the Afghan Pamirs" are written by biologist Jens Soelberg who in the course of his dissertation led and carried out the Third Danish Pamir expedition, which was a continuation in another region of Ole Olufsen's first two Danish expeditions 1896-1897 and 1898-1899. The Third Danish Pamir Expedition in 2010 was dedicated to ethno-botanical studies among the agro-pastoralist Wakhi and the nomadic Kyrgyz in the Wakhan and Pamirs of Afghanistan, and Soelberg presents two aspects of the work of the expedition. In the first chapter, the author ventures into the now classic debate about the origins of the Oxus in the heart of Central Asia after having come as close as possible to the supposed source himself. In his second chapter, Soelberg switches disciplines and focuses as an ethno-botanist on materials used to build the yurt, the classic dwellings of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. As the author shows, the actual building materials are concrete evidence of the history of the ethnic groups and their connections in this impassable region.

The final chapter, "Collections and Collectors" recounts how the observations and collections which reached Danish museums thanks to the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia began. Ethnographer Ulrik Høj Johnsen stresses that museum collections offer a double view: foreign objects integrated into our museum collections include space for knowledge about the world and the cultural context from where the objects came, but at the same time, they also offer valuable insights into the context of the collectors and collections themselves, their professional background and social environment, interests and *Weltanschauung*. The main argument meshes well with Esther Fihl's chapter. Johnsen's starting point, however, is not Olufsen's collections but rather those Siiger brought back from

the Kalasha. Johnsen places Siiger in the context of the expedition and underscores the conceptual necessity of this glimpse into the role and context of the collector in order to understand museum collections and the possibilities they open to both research and outreach.

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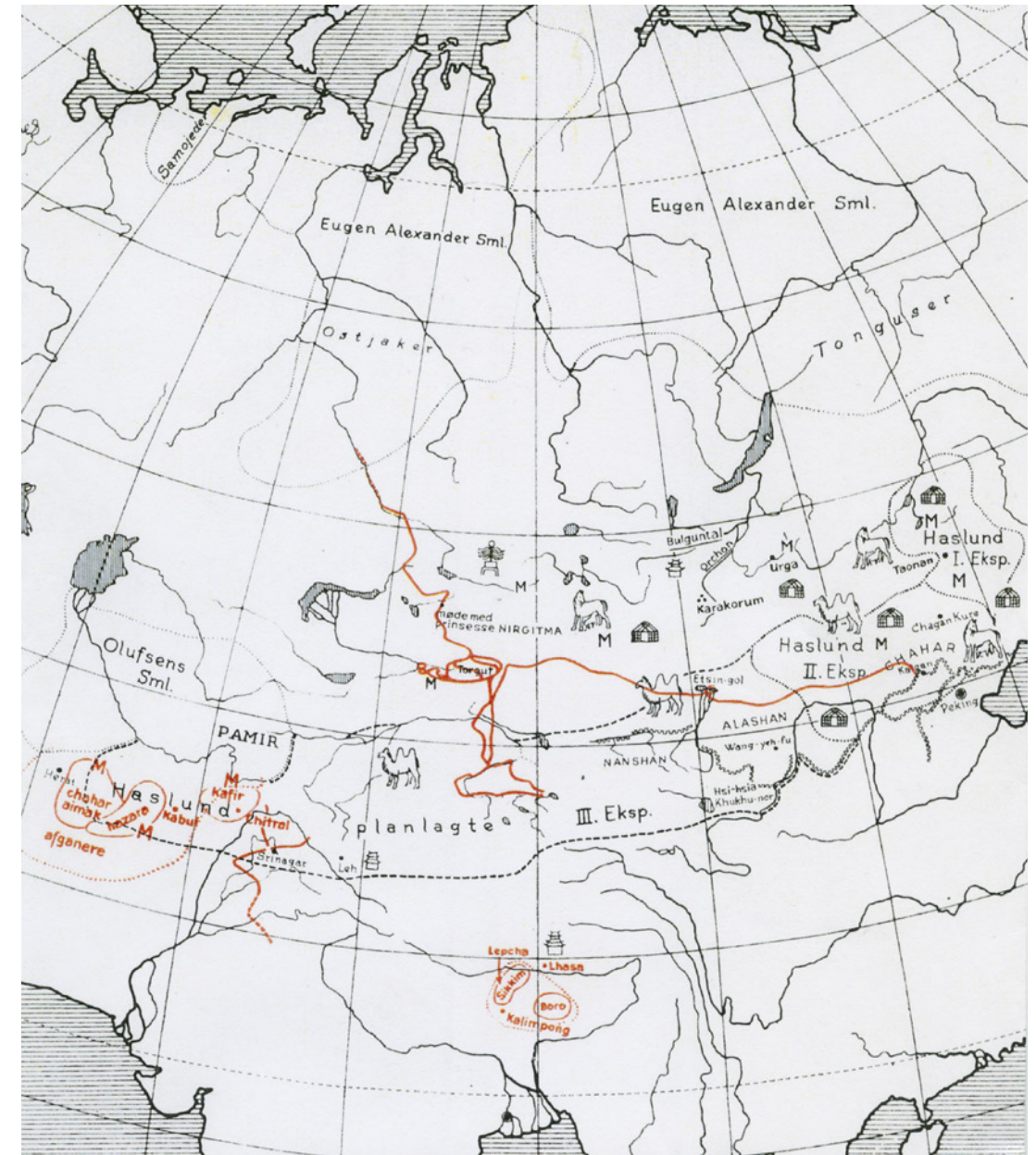
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The 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia was a continuation of a Danish scientific ambition to throw light on the blank spaces of the large-scale map of Asia. The map indicates the intended routes of the expedition and its areas of interest as well as areas of earlier collections. It was published in the article “Arselan” in Naturens Verden from 1958 by Lennart Edelberg.

2. About My Father, Halfdan

Nina Siiger

My father was a very modest man, and he would be profoundly surprised that the things he worked with and the thoughts which passed through his mind mean so much to scholars today. In this chapter, I will let a bit of light fall on his life.

Life in Øster Søgade

My name is Nina Siiger, and I am my father's eldest child. I was born in 1943, my twin siblings were born in 1947. When they got married and I was born, my parents lived in Øster Søgade in Copenhagen out by the lakes in a small flat. That was during the war, and as it was cold and dark, father fetched coal in the cellar; for us and for a few single women who lived in the floors above us. There was a lot of traffic on the stairs, as you could not really go out, and I can remember that there were gunshots in the streets. One day when we were lying on the floor, a bullet implanted itself in the wall.

My father was so kind as to listen to us, and he enjoyed sitting at the table wearing an apron or sitting in a fine chair reading or leafing through books. I climbed up on the back of the chair and combed his dark and slightly thinning hair, and I recall his large, warm, and slightly bony hands. That was soothing.

In the summer, when we were in Søndervig with our grandparents on the west coast, my father only came briefly as he had to earn a living. But when he was finally there, he pretended to be a troll who came down from the sand dunes to catch us. We ran in circles, and we were delightfully afraid. He was really good at telling stories about the land of the lampposts and other strange things. We got letters about everything that happened in Copenhagen; for instance, that there were crocodiles on the loose. They lived in the lake, but they would also go for promenades on the Strøget (which is a major pedestrian area in central Copenhagen).

There were also fine descriptions of the summer fashions. We were a bit irritated about some of the nonsense he wrote. He also told the most wonderful stories when we were supposed to go to bed or on Christmas Eve when we sat in the dark and waited for the door to be opened to the Christmas tree.

Father's early life and education

My father was the first of five children; the youngest were a pair of identical twins. One of my father's brothers, named Preben, wanted to paint and went to the painter's school in Charlottenborg. My father's father thought that was a bit absurd and that you could not live off painting and so on. But my father stood up for him, and so Preben was allowed to choose the career that became his life.



Halfdan og Inga Bolette Siiger. 1941.

Father was a very sensitive child who did everything so that his parents would be satisfied with him. He explained that one time when he was about 8 years old, he had asked his father, "What do you want me to be?" The answer was, "that you are virtuous and obedient". And that he was. Indeed, he was very good at school. He studied in a small unheated room when he moved to boarding school.

My father was obliged to study theology because his father thought that there should be a member of the clergy in the family. He went to the Metropolitan school, and I believe that the Principal dropped by his home to ask his father if Halfdan could not study mathematics instead, as he was really gifted at that. No, he should study ancient languages, and that is what he did, and luckily for him, as was he really happy about that later. That kind of thing can't happen today.

My father finished his education in Theology in 1936, and his studies in the History of Religions in 1942. He had to take a lot of jobs, which didn't bring in much money anyway. My mother wrote in her diary that the war was bad, but that the poverty was worse. That was one of the reasons why he went on the expeditions. That meant that he would get a job as museum curator in the National Museum of Denmark when he returned, and that solved a lot of worries.

The expedition

The Journey to Chitral

There were many nerve-wracking months before Haslund-Christensen's expedition was finally in place in 1947. Prince Axel was among those who offered funding – and the very last grant came from the Carlsberg Foundation. So the final positive decision was made by the Executive Committee of the expedition. My father signed a life insurance policy which would have paid out 5,000 Danish Crowns if he died, 10,000 in case of serious injury, 15% for polio and 400 Crowns for infant death. The total cost of the policy was 28.50 Crowns annually which was a very large sum at the time.

When my father left, I was four and a half years old, and the twins were two months old.

There were a lot of letters about the trip. The first was from Germany, about how it was still in ruins. In the train, there was a car where the so-called "American Girls" hung out with chocolate, perfume, and drinks. He wrote about their

strange physiogamies: some had crafty and cunning eyes and others were flat at the nape of the neck. (I mention this because part of the field work involved measuring heads, even though my father had his doubts about the scientific value of the idea). He was so diligent that we got a letter nearly every fortnight. They were all numbered with the names of the recipient and date they went into the mail on the envelope. When my father was far out in the field, he would pay curriers to take letters to the next relay station, from where it could be sent onwards.

He sailed from Antwerp with the *Malaga*. We stayed in Holstebro with my grandparents. They were both dentists, and my mother got a lot of help from them. This was only shortly after the end of the war, and we were still short of money.

On his way to Peshawar, he sent a letter from Bombay writing that “I miss having Scandinavian women around me – and the Danish language. All of us travellers get on very well together, but among men, it is either professional stuff or masculine humour. It is only between man and woman that a lively dialogue emerges where you don’t just talk with brain and words, but with heart and mind”.

Chitral

We got a lot of letters – well over 200. He wrote about what he experienced and the great amount of work involved with endless obligatory visits to get permission with stamps and golden seals, and there were also letters to the Prince of Chitral and other official people. But for him, the best letters were those from home, with a crown on them. They opened doors.

He missed his Bolette and the way they talked, which really was their very own. They covered all of humanity in their surveys. “With you, I feel myself free and unconstrained; with anyone else, I always have anxious doubts about whether they will misunderstand what I say [...] PS. I have had enough of people telling you that I am going to bed with lots of dark girls. That is nothing but hot air. I can assure you that since I left, I have always slept alone and never got a kiss. If people knew what it is like to be on an expedition! Here in the East, you are always working with influential people or you are nothing and can’t do anything. There are only a few who get permission to travel up to the Chitral pastors at the mission; that I got permission is mostly because I write on letterhead paper with a crown on it. That really is a magical formula. It is not because I am a museum man or a scientist. No – I am first and foremost a royal envoy”.

Father often said that he really matured on the expeditions. Among other things, he explained that after a long trip with interpreters and porters, he reached a river lying hundreds of meters below in a ravine, and the only means of getting across was a spindly narrow bridge thrown across the gap. They stopped – but there was no other way. Otherwise they would have had to march along the river, and even then, they would have lost at least a day of travelling. He realized that they had to cross the bridge – even if it was in bad shape and my father had a fear of heights. But there was no way to avoid it. Otherwise the porters would have lost their trust and leave him. So he went across, and he always remembered the water roaring far below, but he did not look down. The bridge swayed. He held his breath, and the porters with the goods followed after him. He had to lie down when they had all gotten across, but at the same time he felt that he had won over his fear.

The Mehtar – that is to say the prince – gave my father a servant who was supposed to help with the acquisition of costumes for the National Museum of Denmark. It turned out that the servant managed to work the black market in grand style, threatening the natives to sell dearly so that he could get the profits for himself. Fortunately, my father found him out, and he managed to purchase some fine stuff, including women’s veils. But many of the people were so poor that they went around in clothes that they had sewn themselves from sacks.

People in Chitral had difficulties understanding what my father wanted to do out there. Was he hunting? No, he didn’t have a gun. Was he interested in politics? Apparently not. Was it women? No, he always sat around talking to old men. But they knew what he was and what he wanted. Here was a white man who was interested in the Moslem ruling class. That meant that they respected him and helped him in purchasing things and found locals so that he could make and record his anthropological measurements.

My father’s energy and dedication meant that my mother got a letter at least every fortnight, and frequently more often. Sometimes there were whole bundles. The letters were very tender and sweet, relating how much he missed her and us. He painted pictures with words on what was happening at home with us. This was particularly true around Christmas and the summer vacations. One time, my father was in Mardan in July when it was 36-42° C. He was impatient for the monsoon to come. He admired Pastor Christensen, who could stand it there for years. People would get terribly bored, as there was no one interesting to talk to, and the climate was too harsh.

My mother wrote a letter to my father, saying that she felt sorry for him because he had been alone for so long. But he wrote back: “That had a positive effect: I have gathered my thoughts because I was drawn to look at my inner life and began organising my most important principal views on the history of religion and philosophy. I have managed to lay a foundation for my own thoughts and my own foundation for understanding the problems”.

In 1949, he wrote home, “Twice now, I have made my way through the jungle on narrow paths. Now the last time, 20 coolies followed through three to four meter-high jungle grass, which completely hid us. I have visited quite a few isolated monasteries, but will most likely not enter a monastery as it is my understanding – which is also shared by the Prime Minister of Sikkim – that I would not get a lot out of it. Everything in the monastery is a matter of routine. The level of knowledge is low. Most monks can neither read nor write”. So the plans for a monastery were abandoned, but mother must not tell anyone, especially not journalists, as it would be best if the expedition had no difficulties. My mother should say that they are working with the Lepchas and would finish with them first. Father wrote that he was bored of not having enough dramatic and suspenseful stuff to talk about. The most dramatic thing was his constant struggle not to be cheated for his money.

After the expeditions

Museums and ballet

We went to museums a lot because he always had free admission. That was not so boring because he could always tell a good story. But we never agreed about Titian’s Renaissance women. Father rather liked the fat white women. He also felt that the ballet dancers were too thin. It was always a disappointment for him that one could count their ribs.

Father loved art. He wished that he had had the means to buy more art from the different regions where he had been. But later he said that this was good, because then no one could say that he bought the best for himself. He loved porcelain, and so he was a regular at the David’s Samling – a small private Danish gallery with a fine collection of Islamic art – whenever he went to Copenhagen. He had gone to school together with the painter Ejer Bille who had been particularly

*The Siiger family,
1955*



Vacation on Mols, 1974

bad at school. Father knew that he wanted to be a great painter, and the Principal also said that Bille would never make a good student, so there was nothing wrong with Bille not doing well at school.

When I got into ballet school at the theatre, I took my father as partner. We saw all of the ballets, and when I got home I teased him, saying that he should do such and such, and lift me up in some particular way. We had a lot of fun that way.

My father's nature

My father was always the one who settled the tensions in the family. In my mother's family, the Trondhemms, they were very temperamental. So there were a lot of conflicts which my mother had difficulties straightening out. Halfdan was calm and thorough, and they respected him. Everyone always asked Halfdan for advice. What none of them knew was that he would stand in the bathroom, stamping his feet and gritting his teeth such that we children were completely frightened. I asked mother why, and she answered that he had never gotten over the rage enflamed by his tyrannical father. He was never good enough. One time when he was way out in the Himalayas, he got a currier to run to the nearest city where he could deliver a telegram which was wired off to a florist in Copenhagen who delivered a bouquet for his parents' wedding anniversary. Just imagine! He was so brainwashed that that was completely normal. It's hardly amazing that it took an expedition to liberate him.

Old Age

I can remember that I once asked a therapist how much initiative one could take in a family. "As much as you like as long as you don't infringe on the others", was the answer. As a child and youth, my father was never allowed to decide anything at all. He had to be obedient and accomplished, and so he used all his energy on that. But the expedition made a man out of him, as I said. And up to his death, when he was 89 years old, he maintained his interest in culture and religion. We had lots of good discussions about this kind of thing right up to the end. He remained open-minded and loved talking with young people – both to listen and to talk.



Vacation on Mols, 1974

3. Halfdan Siiger and the History of Religions at Aarhus University¹

Armin W. Geertz

Halfdan Siiger was hired by the University of Aarhus to establish an Institute of the History of Religions in 1960. But Siiger was involved in much more than establishing the institutional framework for the Institute and its academic study programs and research environment. He was also involved in developing the study programs, syllabi and courses for the discipline of Christian Studies (which despite its name corresponded to what is often called Religious Studies in England and the United States). The latter programs gave degrees allowing students to become teachers in the secondary schools where the non-confessional study of religion was and still is mandatory. Furthermore, Siiger was involved in establishing the discipline of Ethnography at the University of Aarhus and served as external examiner for many years.

Thus Siiger played a significant role for several disciplines and, in the process, interacted with a large number of scholars and students, many of whom drew inspiration from his vast knowledge of the history of religions and from his admirable personality. Siiger was the perfect gentlemen and scholar. He was always ready to help colleagues, students, and friends. Many of us *are* what we are today as individuals and scholars because of him.

During the 1950s, students from the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Aarhus received their M.A. degrees in Christian Studies. They were taught the theological disciplines by teachers from the Faculty of Theology, but received very little teaching in the History of Religions. Courses were offered by Professor Svend Aage Pallis from the University of Copenhagen the few times he was in

¹ This chapter is a revised and somewhat expanded version of a subsection in an article by Tim Jensen and me entitled "From the History of Religions to the Study of Religion in Denmark: An Essay on the Subject, Organizational History and Research Themes" *Temenos* 50 (1), 2014, 79-113.

Aarhus. This situation was not optimal, and after several years of negotiations, which began already in 1953, between the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Humanities, an evaluating committee consisting of professors Svend Aage Pal-lis, F. Blatt, P. V. Glob, E. Hammershaimb, and Grethe Hjort was appointed the 1st of January 1960. The result of their evaluation, as everyone knows today, was to recommend the appointment of Museum Inspector, cand.theol. et mag.art. Halfdan Siiger as Professor of the History of Religions.

Siiger took on the position on November 1, 1960. 19 years later, due to age, Siiger applied for and was granted retirement by Royal Decree from March 31, 1979.

Siiger developed his particular vision of the history of religions as the study of religions in the ancient worlds of the Near East and Asia, modern world religions and the religions of indigenous peoples and tribes. This vision was formulated in the syllabus and teaching programmes in Aarhus and, upon negotiations with Professor Prytz-Johansen, also in Copenhagen. This vision, shared by both professors, consisted of a combination of intensive textual studies, including studies of texts in their original languages, as well as historical and ethnographic sources on the one hand and the comparative, so-called phenomenology of religion, on the other. Thus the highly particular dimensions were confronted by the comparative and theoretical dimensions. Siiger was more interested in the empirical and particular rather than the theoretical and reflective dimensions, but he knew that both dimensions were important. Thus, because of his style of scholarship and teaching, the many exciting philosophical, linguistic, anthropological, and literary theories on religion and other subjects, that swept through the humanities during the 1960s and 1970s, were considered by Siiger to be secondary to the study of religious texts and ethnographic and historical descriptive accounts. Siiger's academic stance thus led to many discussions and debates with colleagues and students in other humanistic disciplines, also at the Faculty of Theology, but Siiger, always the gentleman, firmly and politely maintained his stance.

The result was that his students, such as myself and my colleagues, came to realize that the basic methodological training that we received from Siiger has served us well during our later phases of growth in theoretical reflection that came to characterize the study of religion in Denmark and world-wide since the 1980s.

In 1962, Siiger was offered to establish his Institute in a villa just outside of the university campus on Paludan-Müllers Vej. Any visitors to the Institute, including students, were personally greeted by the Professor himself. Those of us, who were his students, were given the highly valuable privilege of owning our own keys.

As the Institute grew and the number of students also grew, the university hired two Associate Professors, Erik Haarh and Bent Smidt Hansen. He was furthermore assisted by scholars of Greek Jep Scavenius and Gert E. Skov. At Christian Studies an additional 4 associate professors helped carry the burden. The number of students in the History of Religions and Christian Studies grew from 42 in 1960 to 391 in 1979.

Since then, the Institute of the History of Religions grew. In 1982 it was transferred to the Faculty of Theology due to financial difficulties in the Faculty of Humanities. Siiger's Professorial chair, which had been vacant since his retirement, was filled by Dr. Phil. Erik Haarh, who was called to the Chair in 1983. In 1985, the Institute of the History of Religions and the Institute of Christian Studies established a partially merged study programme. In 1990, the two Institutes were completely merged into the Institute for the Study of Religion with completely merged study programmes. Due to illness, Erik Haarh retired in 1987, and shortly thereafter died in 1993. In 1995, I had the honor of taking over the Professorial chair. Siiger continued to grace us with his presence at various conferences and events, and he was also present at my Inaugural Lecture. During the reception which followed, Siiger gave his blessings to me in a kind and dignified speech. I will never forget that moment, which moved my wife, Rita, and me very much.

Today, we are a thriving department within the framework of the new Institute of Culture and Society at the Faculty of Arts. We have 14 full-time tenured staff (including 2 permanent professors and 2 temporary professors). We have a large body of students, Ph.D. students, post docs, visiting professors and adjunct professors. It was impossible for us so many years ago to imagine the bright future that lay ahead of us. And, although many factors have been in play with many opportunities and many people, it is worth remembering that Professor Halfdan Siiger started it all. Perhaps he also had a vision of this bright future that we are enjoying today. If not, at least the thought keeps me warm whenever I think of him.

About the author

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4. Cultural Meanings of Migrating Objects

Analytical Perspectives on Explorations of Central Asia in the Late 19th Century

Esther Fihl

Re-explorations of Central Asia

On the initiative of First Lieutenant Ole Olufsen, two successive expeditions to Central Asia set out from Denmark in the 1890s and they paved the way for a series of later Danish explorations of Central Asia and the Hindu Kush area. On the first expedition, Olufsen was accompanied by his friend First Lieutenant Oscar Philipsen, while on the second, the botanist Ove Paulsen and the physicist Anthon Højler escorted him. The expeditions were strikingly interdisciplinary and returned home with significant collections of flora, fauna and objects for museums.

In the late 19th century, the political geography of Central Asia looked quite different from what we see demarcated on a modern map. The colonial presence of Imperial Russia was rapidly growing in the steppe between the Caspian Sea in the west and the Chinese border in the Pamirs to the east. From the 1870s, it had gradually reduced the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara to vassals while bits of the surrounding region had already been placed directly under Russian military administration in the preceding decade. In the Hindu Kush to the south, it was the competing British Empire – in the guise of British India – which tried to bring its influence to bear in Afghanistan and up into the Pamirs. Also the Chinese empire was expanding its influence to the west up into the Pamirs and Chinese military was patrolling the borders from Kasghar in Xinjiang. These expansions into Central Asia by the three competing empires, also known as the



During their stay in the Pamirs, the members of the expeditions at first lived in canvas tents brought with them as part of their huge luggage from Denmark. Later two Kyrgyz felt tents proved more comfortable in the cold and severe climate with night temperature below minus 10°C. Their travelling companion, the Bukharan attaché Mirza, and their servant Hamrakul are posing for photo in the Danish camp. (Photo: Olufsen, 1889-99. Archives of the National Museum, Denmark).

Great Game, played an important role in determining the conditions under which the Danes were able to work.

The two Danish expeditions which took place in 1896-97 and 1898-99 are known as the First and Second Danish Pamir expeditions, respectively. The exploration of the Pamirs was the main goal and expectations are high as the members of the second expedition in May 1898 approached their destination:

There lies Pamir! We see a mighty snow covered mountain range, glittering and remote, it is the Trans-Alai Chain, – called Katman Tagh by the natives – the northern mountain boundary of Pamir. Over these mountains lays our path, behind them our goal.

A few days later we rode slowly up over the Kisil Art Pass and found ourselves in Pamir. There we remained nine months. Half of the time, or thereabouts, we were snowbound in our winter quarters in Chorock in Shugnan, while the summer of 1898 was our actual working period in High Pamir. (Paulsen 1920:29f).

The four members of the Danish expeditions travelled via St. Petersburg and the Caucasus and worked their way through Russian Central Asia and the Pamirs during an historical era when the region was basically being “re-explored” by Europe. War and disturbances in Central Asia during previous centuries had meant that it was only by risking their lives that Europeans could move along the once flowering Silk Road in Central Asia. In the 1860s, this situation started to change as the Russians directed their colonial project to the east. The Russian outposts and finally the railways began to function as a security network for the series of European travellers who came to visit the region in the later part of the 19th century (Muravyov 1977; Vámbéry 1864; Ujfalvy 1879, Lansdell 1885, Moser 1885; Hedin 1898).

Many of these travellers fixed their research or personal recollections in writing, and like Olufsen a few of them also brought home objects for European museums. Up until the Russian Revolutions of 1917, the on-going discussions between West and East European (including Russian) scholars and scientifically oriented adventurers on the study of the geographical and ethnographical features of Central Asia, were relatively uniform. This changed radically in the succeeding period of Soviet domination, when westerners were more or less excluded from the direct study of the peoples and cultures of the Central Asian Soviet republics, which had earlier been known as Russian Central Asia, Middle Asia – or Russian Turkestan as the British named the region under Tsarist rule.

Yet another new era in the ethnographic study of Central Asian society and culture was opened with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the ensuing developments. The region was transformed into politically independent nation-states, today known under the names of Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The area “again” opened up to also western academic



Travel route of the two Danish expeditions through Central Asia, 1896-1899. (Drawing by Jørgen Mührmann-Lund, Moesgaard Museum, Denmark).

studies and has witnessed the arrival of a wide variety of western scholars, travellers, writers, and development aid workers, etc.

This chapter is based on my previous works (Fihl 2002, 2003, 2010, 2012), which relate to the above Post-Soviet revival of western studies of Central Asia. In my work I have found it important to focus on the ways in which the peoples and cultures of the region have been described through time not only by scholars and travellers from different parts of the world visiting the area, but also the way in which different Central Asian groups have viewed themselves and others.

In the following my main argument is that in order to study the way Central Asia in the late 19th century is presented in texts and through collected objects deriving from the two Danish expeditions, it is important to try to catch, on the one hand, the mental conceptions of the world borne by the various members of the expeditions, and on the other their interaction with the home context as well as the Central Asian context. As space is limited here I can, however, give only glimpses into how this can be recognized in opinions expressed, experiences noted and observations made – together with the actual collections of plants, animals and objects. The method implies teasing out the cultural self-portrayals of

the four expedition members as well as their presentation of cultural otherness in order to analyse how these were reflected in also their academic praxis and intentions when collecting objects, flora and fauna and when writing notes and entries.

The relativity of texts and objects

The vast majority of the concrete materials, upon which my analysis of the two Danish Pamir expeditions rests, consist of what the four members of the Danish expeditions themselves have produced and collected. As individuals, each of these four men joined the expeditions with their own specific skills as illustrated in the unpublished memories by Philipsen in his narrative on one of the many episodes when the Danes became subject to quite some interest on the part of Russian military officials present in the occupied territories which the expeditions had to pass on their route through Central Asia. In the newly occupied Turkistan, it led to an awkward situation near Merv where Philipsen is taken to be the “Crown Prince of Denmark” and his military training became of use in navigating on the Russian military scene:

One day, while we were eating our lunch, our servant announced that a Russian Cossack colonial and his adjutant wished to pay their respects. The colonial was extremely formal and deferential. He knew, he told us, that I was Prince Christian of Denmark and that I was travelling incognito... I protested strongly... He refused to believe me. The reasons for this misunderstanding were natural enough. We were travelling in an imperial saloon carriage, something not normally granted to mere mortals. I protested once again. The colonial bowed, smiled, and declared that my incognito would be respected. We set off for the parade grounds... We were presented to the officers of the regiment. A few glasses of Don champagne by way of welcome, and the colonial requested me to take over command of the regiment. I enquired as to how this should be carried out in practice. Nothing could be simpler, I was told. I was to ride out in front of the regiment, stop in the centre and shout in Russian, “I greet you, Cossacks”. The Cossacks would then reply, “And we greet you Your Royal Highness’... There were seven or eight hundred men. They trotted and galloped. They attacked at full tilt in a line, then attacked a mass group, there were individual fights, fencing on foot, and so on. It was all excellent, and at

the end came a display of horsemanship as good as any circus. I thanked them for the honour they had bestowed upon me, was invited to lunch, enjoyed the Don champagne to excess, was returned home, and awoke the following morning with a thundering headache. (cited from Fihl, 2010:116f).

After the journey to Central Asia, Philipsen returned to the Danish military and continued his career there whereas for the rest of his life, Olufsen was occupied with leading expeditions and publishing the results, including a twenty-year stint as general secretary of the Royal Danish Geographical Society. Olufsen and Philipsen were both educated as officers in the Danish army and well-trained in cartography (Olufsen 1897). Well before starting on the journey, on his own Olufsen had begun to read the available geographical and ethnographical literature on Central Asia, and he had also received training in the Turkish language. Anthon Hjuler was trained as a physicist but beyond that he also had some language prerequisites, since in Copenhagen he had been trained in Farsi (the West Iranian language) to such a degree that on the expedition he managed to study the East Iranian languages and dialects in the Vakhān Valley – an area which had been established as a Bukharan and Afghan buffer zone between Russia, British India and China (Hjuler 1912). On his return home, Hjuler became teacher in a secondary school. The fourth expedition member, Ove Paulsen was trained in botany incorporating the most recent scientific trends of the 1890s (Paulsen 1900; 1912; 1920). Far from pursuing extensive studies of flora in the field along the route, the way most exploratory expeditions were undertaken at the time, he was educated to take advantage of quite another method which entailed long term studies carried out in the same geographical area. Thus trained, Paulsen at times came into conflict with his expedition leader who strived always to be on the move and whom Paulsen characterised as old-fashioned and as “Denmark’s last geographical adventurer”. Paulsen finished his academic career as professor at the School of Pharmacology in Copenhagen.

The written parts of the materials kept from the expeditions have mostly been published by the participants themselves in books and articles. It ranges from the highly popular to the most profound science. Of the unpublished texts, I can mention diaries, letters, notebooks, memoirs, shopping lists, project proposals, etc. Hjuler’s diary was published posthumously (Hjuler 1945). Most of the diaries include notes on experiences or observations for almost every single day, on whatever the members viewed as being sufficiently interesting to merit recording

in writing. Together with Philipsen’s memoirs, the diaries are priceless sources for information about the situation and general conditions when adding to the collections certain bits of *ethnographica*, flora, and fauna – or on the acquisition of a related piece of information from Russians or locals.

Some handwritten notebooks contain lists of diverse observations, measurements, or notes on items or linguistic terms. Others include remarks concerning the scientific projects executed by other contemporary researchers in the same domains. Beyond that, they also include methodological instructions or summaries of historical works on Central Asia written by earlier travelling scholars.

My use of the sources is determined by an awareness that the recorded observations, impressions, and feelings purveyed in the first-hand accounts which have survived from the two Pamir expeditions are preserved up to the present day in completely specific social conditions: initially through their choice of being recorded on paper in the 1890s by the expedition members and later through their selection of what was to be kept for the museums, archives, or privately. In this century-long process, the words, actions and feelings have been subjected to different selections and interpretations. Only relatively little in their Central Asian context was grasped as significant enough to be recorded in writing – and relevant enough to be considered worth keeping and eventually included in accounts for the archives for future generations to study.

Our *Weltanschauung* and the social situation in which we find ourselves shape which phenomena we recognize as being relatively interesting and which are less relevant. The words and concepts describing the world are all part of both a wider epistemological and a large socio-political sphere. This means that the different types of materials left by the two Pamir expeditions cannot be considered as raw and neutral facts in themselves but that they were registered and kept by individuals with certain dispositions and skills which these individuals had acquired in order to be able to live and navigate within a specific social context. And in this way their biographical or personal history were entangled in their social life worlds. This means that the members of the expeditions collected objects and produced notes according to these dispositions and skills. Thus their published and unpublished descriptions and the objects collected cannot simply be viewed as direct empirical sources for a Central Asian reality of the 1890s which they reproduced in pure form and which we can assess accurately and correctly. On the contrary, both the written sources and the collected material objects reflect epistemological, personal, social and political relativity.

Two new disciplines: Geography and ethnography in the 1890s

In order to be able to develop the ability to recognize the significance of the situations they would encounter in the lowlands of Central Asia, the expedition members tried to prepare themselves before entering on the journey and also later while travelling en route. They were all familiar with the major European languages and were reading – in particular the works of the Hungarian Arminius (Henry) Vámbéry and the Swiss Henri Moser – to learn about the great oasis cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent (Vámbéry 1864, 1868; Moser 1885). In these and other contemporary accounts of travels to Central Asia, the four Danes were confronted with a rather stereotypical understanding of the various ethnic groups. Formed by the European arrogance and racism of the day, the at times rather unflattering descriptions were taken as general characteristics of the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, and Kirgiz as the Danish expedition members recorded them in their preparatory notebooks. This would be a decisive part of the mental baggage carried by the Danish Pamir expeditions which followed. In a publication describing the contexts of some of the items he brought back to the National Museum in Denmark, Olufsen, however, tried to be more nuanced in his, however, male-centred description when stating:

The Sarts consist of two peoples of different languages. The one, the Tadschiks belong to the Persian race and speak a Persian language: the other, Uzbeks, are of Turkish origin and speak a Turkish language. The Tadschiks are certainly the original inhabitants of Turkestan, while the Uzbeks have immigrated at fairly recent date. In outward appearance the two peoples resemble each other to some extent, since intermarriage has contributed a great deal to erasing the original difference. Even so, it was often possible to detect these differences. The Tadschik is big and heavily built, with regular features and a long, black beard. The Usbek is slender and tall, with sharply marked gestures and a thin beard. There is also an unmistakable difference when it comes to character – The Uzbeks are warlike, the Tadschiks peace-loving. The Uzbeks are proud of the race to which they belong; the Tadschiks lack such a feeling of common identity. The Uzbeks, who are characterised by a plainness of lifestyle and outer appearance, look with disdain on the effeminate Tadschiks, who value costly furniture and magnificent costumes: the

Tadschiks considered the Uzbeks to be half-savages they could completely control by dint of their higher intelligence and greater riches. (Olufsen 1900).²

In much of his work, Ole Olufsen concentrated on geography and ethnography (Olufsen 1904, 1906, 1911). Several of the questions dominating Danish studies in geography in the 1890s were linked to discussions about the degree to which the natural environment influences the conditions of human life and the development of cultural diversity in the world. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the study of geography increasingly rested on scientific observations and the idea of the travelling scientist. In Denmark at this time, the study of history entailed scientific interest in viewing nature's influence on peoples and their histories, and this context created the basis for geography and, later, ethnography as independent disciplines (Løffler 1893).

Founded in 1876, the Royal Danish Geographical Society helped create an independent chair in geography at the University of Copenhagen by 1883. Aside from materials about the contemporary Danish expeditions in the North Atlantic, the *Geografisk Tidsskrift* (the journal published by the Society) also launched a series of articles on foreign expeditions to, i.a., Asia, Africa, and the polar regions. The first professor of the new discipline was Ernst Løffler, and as tutor he guided Olufsen's private study in geography before the first journey to Central Asia in 1896 and he communicated the view that geography as a discipline occupies a "midway position between the natural-scientific and the historical subjects" (Løffler, 1911:62).

In Copenhagen in the years 1894-96, Olufsen also went regularly to the Ethnographic Museum which had recently been incorporated into the National Museum, founded in 1892. Given his planned expeditions to Central Asia, the visits resulted in his promise of bringing ethnographic items home to the museum to enlarge its collections. The National Museum accepted the offer and an agreement was reached with Olufsen. A letter of recommendation was issued stating that it "would be most desirable for First Lieutenant Olufsen to be enabled to make comprehensive purchases for the Ethnographic Collections at the National Museum. The National Museum will follow First Lieutenant Olufsen's trip with great interest; it would be deeply appreciated if the necessary funding could be found".³

² Translated from Danish and cited from Fihl, 2010:442f.

³ Translated from Danish and cited from Fihl, 2010:84.

It is characteristic of early Danish ethnographic research on foreign societies and cultures that the discipline developed in a context dominated mainly by museum work and geographical questions rather than having grown out of a Danish colonial context, as ethnography and anthropology did in, for example, in England. At the time of the two Danish Pamir expeditions, a continental European discourse on natural history had long influenced Danish ethnography instead of the more sociological orientation which came to dominate the British and French discourses.

In Danish academic circles, interest in the interdependencies of different aspects in nature accompanied by ideas of objective observations based on scientific methods ruled within both geography and ethnography. In the middle of the 19th century, the performance of science in accordance with these objects and methods meant that extensive research voyages were seen as a suitable means of carrying out research. This was decisive for Olufsen's initiative in the 1890s, establishing Danish scientific expeditions to Central Asia with the aim of investigating geographical, ethnographical, botanical, and zoological features while collecting ethnographical materials, plants and animals for the Danish museums as they travelled along. Olufsen planned and carried out his expeditions at a moment when the field of geography had just been established as a separate discipline at the University of Copenhagen. The ethnographical discussions in geography had only just begun whereas the origin of ethnographical discussions at the National Museum went back to early in the 19th century. At the museum, they were basically focussed on organising the ethnographic items into groups generating their significance from contemporary ethnographic understandings of culture. Dispatching long-term ethnographic research missions to a specific field site was simply not a tradition among the Danish experts.

Olufsen's strategy of collecting items

Before he left Copenhagen, Olufsen was given a three page handwritten instruction by the National Museum of what and how to collect items to bring home:

Only articles that are characteristic or of an especially enlightening nature should be collected, i.e. those that are of interest by dint of their distinct design or pattern. The stronger the design and forming of the material, the greater the interest – you can scarcely go wrong if the articles are of some

valuable metal. For all such examples, it is important to find useful information about their place of origin... Items from Turkestan and the Pamir tribes (Turkomans, Usbeqs and Kirgis) are of greatest interest; it should however, also be possible to acquire good Persian items in the towns of West Turkestan.... The aim of the ethnographical collection ought to be to amass material that will provide as full a picture of the life and cultural standpoint of the people involved as possible... Very large and coarse objects should not be brought back, nor should items which are intended for export be acquired. If a number of items are part of one whole (e.g. a costume, a set of implements, weapons, or the like) an attempt must be made to acquire all of them. The items are to be carefully labelled, with information about the place of purchase, tribal name, material, technique and use ...⁴

Olufsen's registration methods, detected from his lists of acquired items and the 700 collected objects themselves, suggest that he has meticulously fulfilled the written instructions above which he had received from the Director of the National Museum, Sophus Müller, before his departure in 1896. In his division of the artefacts into groups, he stayed quite close to the guidelines Müller had given in the letter where he specified the objects of interest to the museum. As instructed, Olufsen collected complete costumes consisting of coats, caps, shoes and personal accessories, etc. Also various complete equestrian fittings, each item of which he described in the order it was put onto the horse, are among the items brought back to the museum. Beyond that he sought to supplement the objects and data with photos and sketches. As instructed by the museum, he also tried often to record the object's local name, possible uses and the place it was acquired or manufactured.

Before departing for Central Asia, Olufsen paid several visits to the Ethnographical Collection at the National Museum. Here the academic staff was headed by Curator Bahne Kristian Bahnson who in his studies was influenced predominantly by the new German anthropo-geographical discourse on society and culture. In line with that theory, he explained the variation between peoples of the earth mainly in terms of the influence of natural conditions. Climate and soil, in various combinations, could have a retarding effect on cultural change, but as a

⁴ Translated from an unpublished letter in Danish, kept at the National Museum of Denmark and cited from Fihl, 2010:124f.



Two tent bands and a teapot on a patterned floor felt and in the background a tent wall frame. The items all belong to a complete Kyrgyz nomad tent which Ole Olufsen in 1896 collected in the Pamirs and on which he noted that all “parts of this kikitke and its equipment (domestic utensils) are made by the Kirgis themselves, except one copper pot and two copper jugs, which they obtained by barter from the permanently settled Sarts in Turkestan. For a migration, a single kikitke is loaded on 3 horses, or 3 yaks, or 1 camel”. (Items from the Olufsen Collection, National Museum of Denmark. Photo by Ruben Blædel).

whole, natural conditions opened up for various human opportunities that were realised in different ways in various locations on the earth, depending on the version of the specific culture (Bahnson, 1900 I:LXf). He took artefacts to represent the most objective and impartial means of studying the peoples of the earth:

All peoples have artefacts adapted to their needs, taste and development, by means of which they seek to surmount the obstacles which natural conditions and climate place in their path, and which together provide a picture of a specific people's way of life, its industry, customs, and habits, and its spiritual life – a picture which cannot be provided with the same completeness and reliability in any other way (Bahnson, 1887:172).⁵

In his choice of items to be collected, Olufsen had an attentive eye on the different materials used and technical skills involved in their production or decoration also reflecting the nature of the various geographical places the expedition visited. His collection strategy reveals that he clearly aimed to live up to the museum's expectations, but that he did not treat Central Asia as a cultural whole. On the contrary, he applied the same collection strategy within each of the five anthropo-geographical regions he came to establish through his collection of items, namely the Pamir Highlands, the Pandsh (or Panj) River valley, the Merv oasis, the Khiva Khanate, the Emirate of Bukhara with the bordering Russian Imperial Government-General of Turkestan. In each, he sought to collect what the professionals at the museum had described as “regularities” in contrast to “rarities” (Bahnson 1900 II: 297; Olufsen 1911: 147 ff). In each of the established anthropo-geographical regions, he went for typical every-day items which could be compared with items from the other four of his regions. Despite the vast geographical expanses, Olufsen's collection thus presents a certain harmony when beheld as a whole. This is primarily due to the selection of comparable objects from each of the different regions, as the same categories apply to all of the regions despite the fact that these vary widely in demographic and geographic dimensions.

From the above, it becomes apparent that Olufsen's preferences and overall strategy of collection cannot be compared to that of an ordinary dealer in antiquities merely interested in bringing back artefacts for noble clients, private libraries or oriental rooms as was fashionable among upper-class people at the time. Unlike many contemporary European travellers in Central Asia, he was not

⁵ Translated from Danish and cited from Fihl 2010, p. 86.

after kitsch or souvenirs. Instead, Olufsen chose or acquired objects in relation to the specific anthropo-geographical understanding of material culture prevailing in the National Museum at the end of the 19th century. Finally, we can see from the textile, metal, leather and pottery objects collected that Olufsen had a well-developed sense for the craftsmanship invested in the manufacture and decoration of the artefacts. In this fashion he assured that the collected objects represented a rich variety of techniques satisfying Müller's request of letting the material objects mirror "the cultural standpoint" of the people concerned, and as far as possible fulfilling what Müller had outlined in his letter of instructions.

Through the objects he collected in this fashion, Olufsen portrayed Central Asia in a specific manner. He classified objects into types and groups on the basis of a European museum discourse on material and cultural standpoints and he classified the items into five culturally separate geographical sections.

Situation, context, and social sphere

The cultural significance to be read out of the objects in Olufsen's collection must be seen in relation to the position from which he grasped the item in the specific situations in Central Asia and also in relation to the instructions he had received from home. Thus my argument is quite simple and general: that the cultural meaning of objects – like words and actions – can only be interpreted in relation to very concrete situations and contexts. Words are not invariably included in the process when confronted with materiality and this also accounts to the items of the Olufsen Collection where many items are described in only few words by the collector like in his List 1, no. 67: "One small cap, used only by men (obtained by barter in Vakhan)".⁶ Olufsen and his Danish travelling companions have bequeathed to us but few thoughts about the local cultural meaning which can be read from the specific decoration, forms, colours, patterns, and materials – and the same also applies to most of their contemporary European travellers.

My point is that when dealing with old museum objects such as those of the Olufsen Collection, we should indeed be cautious when ascribing particular cultural values to the objects which are bereft of the collectors' original commentary, time and place. The production of an object can be seen as a form of activity

where a person interacting with material and tools expresses and creates practical functions and cultural meanings which are relevant for him with regard to his own particular routine activity embedded in relation to his immediate positions in society. He is acting in accordance with his dispositions and the skills that he masters in a particular social sphere. These may be grounded in a system of positions, rules and classifiers, or they can be formed from ideas about how this system must be changed. In practical reasoning, it is possible that, e.g., a Kyrgyz rug pattern (like the one on page 52) may once have played a role as a tribal emblem and contains shamanistic elements. But over the years this can easily be modified by assimilated orthodox Islamic ideas, by tribal wars and foreign Russian dominance, but also by international market mechanisms resulting in favouring certain patterns and sizes of the carpets. It is thus important in the study of a museum object, neither to omit the historic or the global dimensions of the situation of production and consumption as well as the concrete context and goal of acquisition. What characterises objects and other forms of materiality is precisely that it is possible to assign them different cultural meanings – and that these meanings may change over the lifetime of a single object, between its production and use in Central Asia to its life as a museum object in, e.g., Denmark. Understood this way, I want to stress that it is not the object itself which transmits cultural meanings, but rather its production and use or the cultural and social processes which take place around it. Rather than being embedded as an essence in the object, the cultural significance is always contested by people and always assigned and transmuted in relation to positions, situations, and context. Studying the migration or the transformation process from being objects of use in Central Asia to being objects of display in a Danish museum brings into focus the "social and cultural life" of objects (Appadurai 1986) or strives to uncover their "cultural biography", a term launched by Igor Kopytoff in his study of commodities from a cultural perspective (Kopytoff 1986; Fihl 2003).

In following the instructions of the National Museum, Olufsen selected and acquired his objects in Central Asia according to a certain strategy. In numbering and describing them, he changed their "existence" from being utilitarian objects in a Central Asian context to becoming *ethnographica* in the Danish context of the National Museum. Here, the objects were assigned a certain meaning as museum objects where it was assumed at the time that they – built into themselves so to speak – contained data about a specific people and its cultural standpoint in the world among other peoples. Olufsen was thus pursuing a programme linked

⁶ Translated from Danish and cited from catalogue no. 87, in Fihl, 2010:310.

to other types of ethnographic questions than those that we might wish to pose today when collecting and analysing material culture where the cultural aspirations of local individuals might well be more prominent in the process of registration than was the case for Olufsen.

Olufsen's anthropo-geographical aspirations

In his geographical writings, Olufsen sought to the best of his knowledge to meet also the expectations set by the new issues dominating physical geography in the Europe of the 1890s. He attempted to link the topography with accurate scientific mapping while drawing on what he saw as geological, climatic, and biological givens. As his tutor Professor Löffler underscored, the object of geography was to grasp nature in its entirety in terms of its significance for human cultural life as lectured in the German anthropo-geographical literature (Löffler 1893). Löffler was inspired by this discourse developed especially by Friedrich Ratzel who foregrounded the culture-historical elements in the study of geography and also the spreading of ideas and material culture via human migration or other kinds of diffusions. In adapting to the surrounding natural conditions, existing cultural traditions might be abandoned or modified when being confronted with new items or traditions (Ratzel 1882).

The zoological, botanical, mineralogical, and climatic investigations were performed by the two Danish expeditions according to the scientific understanding founded on western ideas about objective observation and classification. As a result, the members of the expeditions did not undertake systematic investigations of how the Central Asian peoples understood plants, animals, and stones – or which properties were linked to the physical landscape in this part of the world. Therefore, in their descriptions and analyses, founded on inspirations from natural science, the members of the Danish expeditions finely ordered the physical world into units, classes, and hierarchies using a European system of understanding. Once ordered, the categories acquired an objective existence, corresponding to their own European systems of distinctions and a mental image of the world assuming that the physical world could be subjected to objective measurements. Olufsen's drawn maps represented a bird's-eye-view of the spatial landscape and were models for – and not models of – what they endeavoured to present.

Olufsen's descriptions of the landscapes in the five cultural-geographical regions he defined reflected certain ambitions aiming at making an analysis of the complex interplay of natural givens and human society with its culture as can be seen in the following extract from his description of the living conditions in the Pamirs:

In the eastern, or rather in the mid-Pamir the vegetation is so sparse and the summer so short (June, July, and August – the snow-storms begin again in September) that permanent settlement is an impossibility. Only the Kirgis nomads wander close to the rivers and lakes with their herds to make use of this meagre pasture during that brief period. (Olufsen 1898).

Behind the generalised description one glimpses the goal of clarifying that people in Central Asia did not merely dominate the physical terrain, watercourses, climate, geology, plants and animals, etc., but rather how these people were themselves also dominated by the geographical givens in various different ways (Olufsen 1911).

The economy of the part of Central Asia through which the two Pamir expeditions travelled was described as being formed by extensive nomadism and intensive oasis agriculture based on irrigation. It was remarked that in lowland Turkestan in particular, the two economies complemented each other, being specialised and extracting different kinds of natural resources; and both relied on urban crafts and commerce in the larger cities. The professions of nomad, peasant and craftsman were clearly distinguished – and Olufsen saw the distinctions as determined by the character of the landscape:

When one travels through the land, the transitions from oasis to oasis are always: oasis, steppe, desert, steppe, oasis. Out in the steppe that surrounds the oasis the Kirgis often nomadise, as frequently do the Usbegs. The inhabitants of the oasis and the nomads are economically dependent on each other. Farming and every conceivable craft flourish in the oasis, whereas there is no real room for keeping livestock. The nomads have nothing to do with agriculture, only practicing animal husbandry. They provide the oasis with meat, milk, butter, and cheese in return for the products of the oasis. Furthermore, as the nomads supply beasts of burden and people for the caravans, they are indispensable for the tradesmen of the oasis as well. (Olufsen, 1918a:131).⁷

⁷ Translated from Danish and cited from Fihl, 2010:612f.

In describing different trades and population groups, Olufsen stressed that a characteristic feature in the social structures was that the division of labour did not always cleave along the lines of ethnic groups or clans. According to changing ecological conditions or shifts in the political situation, individuals or even groups could be transformed into nomads, semi-nomads or farmers (Olufsen 1906).

Among the Kirgiz and the Turkmen, as well as several groups of Uzbek, Olufsen indicated that their cultural traditions and material culture – and even their political organisation structured in tribes and clans regardless of professional pursuits – were closely bound to a nomadic way of life in the Central Asian steppes. In this fashion, these populations were traditionally distinct from the Tajik who historically, linguistically and culturally shared numerous traits with the Iranian cultural area and whose traditions were tightly tied to a mode of life based on agriculture and crafts (Olufsen 1911; 1920).

In particular, in the major cosmopolitan oasis cities in the region, elements of the Turkic, Mongol, and Iranian culture had long been fused to form a specific urban culture. According to Olufsen, this culture was mainly borne by the Tajik and Uzbek, although other groups also contributed. On the other hand, however, other groups, e.g., the Turkmen, had apparently maintained several distinct traditions, at least in their material culture. Olufsen also described how, since the appearance of Islam around 700 A.D., Bukhara and Samarkand had developed into significant centres of religious culture in Central Asia with many universities and educational institutions (Olufsen 1911).

In many of his descriptions of Central Asia, Olufsen focussed on the influence of geography and history in the formation of society and culture. He stressed that one simply could not grasp the degree of the cultural complexity of the region if one were to base one's understanding simply on ethnic, linguistic, or racial groups. On the contrary, the geographical and historical circumstances meant that life was played out in a complex mosaic of farmers, nomads, and urban dwellers and where markers of ethnic, tribal, and social identity played at most a subsidiary role. He portrayed the various types of social groups as being different with respect to their origins, language, race, local political systems, and to some degree also their professions and religion. However, at the same time he underscored that they interacted so closely together that they had eventually grown together in mutual economic and political interdependence that in several ways, it was no longer possible to distinguish them in cultural terms.

Olufsen described the different ways of life attached to the different social groups at the same time as, in the collection of their material culture, he portrayed their shared cultural and religious affiliations. This approach appears to draw on scientific anthropo-geographical intentions of describing the interplay of nature, culture, society, and history. These intentions are not explicit in Olufsen's own formulations but implicitly account for them.

These anthropo-geographical aspects were new in the 1890s in terms of what was previously published on Central Asia in Danish or in any of the major European languages. In this way, his texts manage to set themselves apart from most of the contemporary reports of European travellers in the region, as well as from the views presented in the scientific handbooks dating from the end of the 19th century. Authors of the existing literature, popular and scholarly alike, were often preoccupied with the idea of classifying populations, dividing groups and sub-groups by linguistic and racial characteristics. The appearance of the members of the groups and their socio-cultural characteristics were assumed to be distinct and were analysed on the basis of racial traits defined as being Mongol, Turkic, or Iranian, respectively (with the last often classified with the contentious term "Aryan"). The socio-cultural distinctions or similarities of social groups (understood as "races") were analysed as reflecting group-specific and racially inherited propensities. In certain of their texts, the members of the Danish expeditions revealed that they had difficulties with freeing themselves from this European mind-set.

Asymmetrical counter concepts

During the second expedition, Hjuler and Olufsen studied the languages spoken in Vakhan, Bukhara, and Khiva. Their investigation was based on the idea that a people identified themselves through their language as defined by its specific linguistic traits. Paulsen also carried out physical-anthropological investigations of the inhabitants in some of the places visited. These types of studies were grounded in the assumption that it was possible to divide the peoples of the earth into groups and sub-groups simply based on scientific measurements of the dimensions of parts of the body, and on descriptions of the skin-colour, etc. The assumption prevailed that race would reveal a people's peculiar cultural and mental characteristics. On the route along the Pandsh River Paulsen reassured ninety-eight

people in Vakhn and Shugnan. He was, however, unsuccessful in getting measurements of any females despite the persistent attempts of the *aksakals* [village headmen] to press-gang the women: “The collected notes are thus under the same disadvantage as most of the examinations of primitive tribes – not even Ujfalvy was able to collect information about women”. (Hansen, 1904:223).

Cultural otherness was so to say enclosed and defined by the descriptions composed and items collected by the members of the Danish expeditions. The materials left from the expeditions are characterised by a certain underlying mental image reflecting a certain understanding of self and cultural others. Using asymmetrical counter concepts (Koselleck 1979) in their texts, Olufsen and the other Danish expedition members distinguished the Central Asians as being to varying degrees different from the members of the small Danish team – as when characterising the local influence of mullahs:

They look askance at every European with whom they will have nothing to do if it is not strictly necessary, and on being asked about something by the European who visits the mosques with permission from their own authorities, they generally do not answer, looking scornfully at the European or turning their back upon him. The mullahs, who from their childhood are inoculated with the old-fashioned fanaticism against the Europeans or such as think otherwise, maintain the latter in the population. Elsewhere fanaticism is not great among the inhabitants of Central Asia. One may be as good friends with them as if one were their compatriot, but on coming near to a mullah the latter instantly makes bad blood, and one’s best friends among the natives who would have sacrificed themselves for their European master are, some minutes after the mullah has whispered into their ear, one’s worst enemies, who would certainly with cold blood and conscious of having done a good action, cut the throat of their previous best European friend. (Olufsen, 1911:390f).

Central Asians were often presented as the counter image of the travellers themselves, creating a kind of cultural “alterity”. Many descriptions strike the contrast between, e.g., the practically and logically thinking Europeans against “the cultural others” – beings shrouded in dream-like imageries. The Europeans were depicted as free individuals in contrast to, e.g., the Uzbeks who were viewed as being bound up in a net of constricting fanaticism. The Europeans – Danes or Russians – represented something dynamic while the Oriental was indolent.

The picture which these Danes were drawing of the region through which they were passing often says more about them and their European context than it does about Central Asia. Observations on the unknown seem to be assimilated into the world view borne by the European travellers. What the travellers saw – or more accurately expected to see – was somehow adjusted and classified out of and into their own known universe where features for which they were not mentally prepared were frequently ignored (Ryan 1981).

Contesting paradigms

The driving force behind conducting the two Central Asian expeditions and for Olufsen the main idea was seemingly the wish to achieve scientific fame while satisfying the passion for adventure as well. At various times in the course of the second expedition, Olufsen came into conflict with the competent and forward-looking botanist Ove Paulsen who was the personification of the modern scientist. In line with the most recent scientific trends of the 1890s, in his own field Paulsen was as earlier mentioned trained to pursue intensive studies and carry out scientific investigations at a chosen and specific geographic spot. This was both foreign to and incompatible with the extensive discovery-type studies of the old-fashioned expedition type which seemed to be part of Olufsen’s idea of data collection. Paulsen went for studying desert ecotypes and in one of his publications, he made the following remarks on what the expedition form meant to his study of vegetation and collections of plants for the Botanical Museum in Copenhagen:

As the expedition never remained long in one place, there was not much opportunity for thorough investigation of the desert in any locality, so that this memoir is the result of observations in many parts, most of which were only examined for a short time. Physiognomy therefor occupies a prominent place in the description of a type of vegetation which in detail would constitute an extensive research. It is to be hoped that detailed investigations, such as those made at the desert laboratory in Tucson (Arizona) or similar to Fitting’s researches in the Sahara will also be made in the Transcaspiian desert, so characteristic and worthy of careful examination. (Paulsen, 1912:2).

The expedition form whereby scholarly travellers collected data, plants, animals, and objects along the way suited Olufsen’s idea of what science was about. For

him it offered the best way to get a feel for, and knowledge, of the lay of the land and its peoples. His generalising descriptions of the regularities of the nature, culture, and society of Central Asia fitted naturally into the framework of the work of the expeditions. For Olufsen the goal of the two Pamir expeditions was that he and his travelling companions should return home with as much material collected and compiled as possible, within the limits of the various disciplines: botany, climatology, mineralogy, ethnography, anthropology, geography, linguistics, cartography, etc. The object was to gather as much objective information as possible over the largest possible geographical area. After returning home, the collected data could be treated scientifically by other ethnographers and geographers, or by himself. These individuals could study the connections in terms of the influence of the environment on ways of life; or the diffusion of material cultural traits over large distances; or social change over time. For this type of data collection and studies, the expedition as a form of getting to know the field was viewed as eminently suitable (Fihl 2012).

Olufsen's choice of the matters to be investigated as well as his extensive collecting of the material resonated well with his attempt to live out the idea of a researching traveller. He was in for science and scholarly treatment of the subjects even though he lacked training in either theory or methodology. In fact, in his day there were not many models – either Danish or foreign – for the manner in which an ethnographic fieldworker should gather information about society and culture. At that time, ethnographic fieldwork consisted for the most part in paying longer research visit to museums, archives and libraries in Europe. Virtually serving as laboratories for ethnographers, these institutions guarded materials and writings which had been accumulated over the course of time and there scholars could study the objects and writings of relevance to them in their studies. It was here that ethnographers worked with the remains of cultures. These remains were viewed as scientific evidence testifying to the effects of a spiritual and material past.⁸

Institutions – and particularly the archives and museums – were to secure foreign cultures a place in history before they fell victim to the process of modern development. The focus of ethnography in Olufsen's day was especially on the

material witnesses to human activities and the creative interaction with nature. In contrast to this interest in objects and materiality, the peoples themselves and their social situation, cultural life worlds, and own perspectives on nature were to a certain degree considered to be irrelevant.

The quest for fame

Paulsen's botanical work on the second Pamir expedition was recognized as important. He was showered with academic glory in the years to follow and his merits have remained undisputed. By contrast, the contemporary academic view of Olufsen's scientific engagement never appeared to have been very positive in Denmark. Olufsen's ethnographic and geographic publications were greeted with silence in Danish scholarly circles. In the contemporary literature of the discipline, one finds hardly any trace of a response, either negative or positive. No scholarly rejection of Olufsen's findings can be found – not even references to any potential errors. A first lieutenant and fieldworker, Olufsen was never integrated into the rather narrow academic milieu of Denmark at that time.

A significantly more positive view of the geographical and ethnographical results of the two expeditions does, however, emerge when viewed in the broader international context. Olufsen's work has harvested international recognition from a whole spectrum of sciences including mineralogy, climatology, geography, and ethnography where he is internationally recognized as having supplied detailed information on the climate, geology, society and culture (Becker 1968:7; Westphal-Hellbusch and Bruns 1974:19ff, 31, 38, 41ff; Dor and Naumann 1978:23; Grancy and Kostka 1978; Scarce 1991:237 ff).

From Olufsen's continuous applications to private foundations and public research agencies for the financing of the many expeditions and publication of the material collected, it appears that he viewed himself as a scientific traveller. For him, his wish to discover authentic worlds was equivalent to the discovery of natural truths. Behind Olufsen's interest in encountering the different peoples of Central Asia lay the ideal of penetrating and discovering the unknown, an ideal drawn from the natural sciences.

He was especially interested in exploring blank spots on contemporary maps and he is today also recognised as being the first European to travel along the northern river banks in the Vakhn Valley. Thus also the items he collected for

⁸ Only in 1896, the same year Olufsen set out for Central Asia, did the American ethnographer Franz Boas begin to advocate that the careful collection of ethnographical data should be done by performing long term ethnographical fieldwork (Boas 1982 [1896]).



Three aksakals [village headmen] from Garan listening to their own voices on the phonograph of the expedition. Besides collecting objects, including musical instruments, for the National Museum of Denmark, also sound recordings of speech, singing, and music were collected, especially by Anthon Hjuler who studied the local languages along the river Pandsh. Unfortunately, it has not been possible afterwards to locate these actual recordings. It was quite advanced and remarkable in 1898 on an expedition to bring along a phonograph, the equipment being put into production only a few years previously and only invented in 1877. (Photo: Olufsen, 1898-99. Archives of the National Museum, Copenhagen).

the National Museum of Denmark constitutes the oldest ethnographical collection in the world from this area. In one of his publications he relates the flowing on this part of his explorative travel:

Facing the south bank of the Pændsch river, we had the Afghan fort of Kalai-Pændsch, with a bandit garrison of 300 men. Both in Turkestan and Pamirsky Post people had told me that the north side of the Pændsch River could not be passed except perhaps during the winter when it was frozen. I received the same piece of information from Lieut. Kivekæs, all of which only tempted me even further to try to force this passage. (Olufsen 1898:59).⁹

While the northern banks of the Pandsh River which separates the Hindu-Kush mountain range from the Pamir Mountain range were still a blank in the contemporary literature and on maps, the Pamirs had been the object of a series of Russian and West European exploratory missions which had produced a trickle of books which Olufsen and his team were also able to study before setting out. These publications reflected the contemporary scientific competition between the English and Russian geographical societies in the exploration of the Pamirs, the Hindu Kush, and Chinese Central Asia (Veniukof 1866; Shaw 1870; Yonghusband 1896; Curzon 1878; Alder 1963).

To be on an expedition was for Olufsen the essential part of life and in the end, his death came as a consequence of an illness picked up in Africa. In many of his articles and books on Central Asia, he employs a generalised form of presentation which approaches the usual travellers' narratives of that time, familiar from tales of foreign parts of the world. Travelling as a narrative takes an important place in many of his writings. Elements of descriptions of travel are not only to be found in his articles in the *Geografisk Tidsskrift*. Even in many chapters of his magnum opus *The Emir of Bokhara and his Country* (1911), he deals with descriptions of the hardships of travel, including experiences and observations along the route. These tales include general reflections on the appearance of the landscape or the character and ways of life in Central Asia. Olufsen's not particularly systematic presentation of the environment, climate, ways of life, history and peoples can be arduous reading if one is searching for a systematic understanding of Central Asia in the 1890s. He does not bore the reader by explaining the theoretical or methodological parameters influencing the formation of the

⁹ Translated from Danish and cited from Fihl 2010:276.

texts and the way they should be read. A presentation of his concrete research questions, strategies or techniques of acquiring data will not be found.

However, as a whole, Olufsen's texts can indeed be differentiated from ordinary travel literature as many of his descriptions dwell on recognizing patterns of daily life and separating these from curiosities. In this fashion, he falls into accord with part of the scientific spirit of his day in geography and ethnography. His contribution to geography consists of a series of concrete descriptions carried out against the backdrop of some indirect theoretical ideas about viewing nature, culture and society in context. There is not, however, any discussion of any general contribution to, or analytical understanding of, the sciences of geography and ethnography. The focus on patterns contributes to distinguishing his work and the communication of its results from a good part of the travel literature on Central Asia of that time. In this sense, the tone of the publications reveals that the public he sought were geographically interested readers, scholars, scientists, and indeed other travelling scholars.

Concluding remarks

My study of the two Danish expeditions to Central Asia in the late 19th century has aimed to show that the value of the written accounts produced and the objects collected and brought home to Danish museums must be assessed not only in relation to the extent they are able to throw light on social, cultural and geographic aspects of life among the peoples of Central Asia; that is to say about whom the texts are produced, and among whom the objects were collected. A more complete image of the authenticity of both objects and the information in the texts is possible if they are also appreciated in relation to the historical and practical conditions under which the members of the two expeditions worked as also pointed out in a previous work (Fihl 2002:649).

Thus the results from the expeditions, and especially the old historical museum items today kept by the National Museum of Denmark, should not only be seen as grounded in an epistemological space, but also understood in a wider social and political space. The national independence of the new Central Asian states which arose after the demise of the Soviet Union has given Central Asian as well as Western researchers (and others) an opportunity to reevaluate the cultural heritage of the area. In line with this legacy, I believe it is increasingly

important to document the ways in which some of the historical material drawn upon has been produced. This may also help to assure that future research also recognizes the role that various presentations (some produced long ago), now play in the way Central Asians are seen by residents in different parts of the world, as well as the particular way in which Central Asians see each other. Analysing the personal, social, academic, and political implications involved in this process may eventually bring us closer to being able to theorise and problematize the relationship between knowledge and power in both a local and global order.

When studying these old objects and their migration into a European museum and the texts which follow them, I have found it important to dig into the specific situations in which the members of the expeditions operated en r te. The personal context and the academic context were sketched to illuminate the milieu whence the expeditions set out, and to which the results were brought back and communicated. In this way I wanted to point to the importance of an analytical focus on the complex interplay between the productions of these presentations in objects and texts on the one hand and on the other hand the social sphere of the Danish expedition members.

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5. Halfdan Siiger's Religio-Ethnographic Fieldwork in Central and South Asia, 1948

Svend Castenfeldt

Halfdan Siiger was born in 1911 in Copenhagen. His father was a wholesaler, and the Siiger family lived in Øster Søgade. At the University of Copenhagen, Halfdan Siiger was educated in Theology and History of Religions, becoming cand. theol. in 1936 and mag. art. in History of Religions in 1942. From 1944 to 1946, Siiger was employed on a contract basis as a teacher at a school – Øster Borgerdydskole – in Copenhagen. In 1944, he also substituted for staff members on leave or otherwise absent, at the regional archive of Zealand.

From the beginning of 1944, Siiger was periodically engaged at the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen as a scientific assistant at the Ethnographic Department. Dr.phil. et scient. Kaj Birket-Smith (1893-1977) was the then keeper of this Department, a position he held from 1940 till 1963. We shall presently see that especially Birket-Smith became a most important figure for Siiger's professional career. Birket-Smith's teacher at the University of Copenhagen was Hans Peter Steensby (1875-1920), cand.mag. in Geography and Natural History, and with Ethnography as his specialisation. Ethnography also became Birket-Smith's specialisation when he himself took his MA.

The influence of Kaj Birket-Smith upon the science of Ethnography in Denmark was enormous, in fact decisive for more than 20 years. He came to use his qualifications both on expeditions, in professional writing, and in the work of building up and methodically enlarging the ethnographic collections of the National Museum. Birket-Smith supported Siiger during his different assignments at the National Museum. Siiger greatly valued Birket-Smith. So, Siiger was trained at the National Museum in ethnological collecting and registration by

Birket-Smith, as he was responsible for the existing exhibitions showing selected species of human cultures from many parts of the world.¹⁰

Here Siiger also met Henning Haslund-Christensen (1896-1948), who before World War II had led two Danish expeditions to Central Asia, especially for studying Mongol societies and collecting artefacts for the National Museum in Copenhagen. In 1923, Haslund-Christensen came to Mongolia for the first time. Here he and other young Danish men, led by Dr. Med. Carl Krebs, tried to set up a Danish dairy farm and a station for fur trade in the area south of Lake Baikal. Through contact with local Mongols Haslund-Christensen learned their language, and thus he was able to understand their stories and songs. He developed not only skills of observation for ethnological conditions and relations in the Mongolian society, but also a decisive, important wish for understanding the Mongols based upon their own conditions of living.

After the activities at the dairy farm project, Haslund-Christensen became a member of Dr. Sven Hedin's Sino-Swedish expedition in Mongolia 1927-1930. Hedin's expedition included several scientists, who worked on tasks within their respective fields of research. During this expedition, Mongolian folk music became a special field of interest to Haslund-Christensen. He made phonographic records of the music on wax cylinders and collected not only information about music and musicians, but also acquired some musical instruments, along with other artefacts from Mongolian culture and religion. Haslund-Christensen furthermore came to the conclusion that it was most important to secure the knowledge about the inherited culture of the Mongols, before the influence from the surrounding society became too dominating (Edelberg and Ferdinand 1958). Later, in 1936-1937 and again in 1938-1939, Haslund-Christensen organised and led two Danish expeditions to Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. During the expedition in 1936-1937 in Inner Mongolia, Haslund-Christensen collected artefacts for the National Museum.

The Royal Danish Geographical Society was behind the expedition 1938-1939, which had two members besides Haslund-Christensen: Dr. Phil. Kaare Grønbech (1901-1957), philologist, and Werner Jacobsen (1914-1979), a student of archeology.

10 Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, keeper at the National Museum, gave advice on how to concentrate on a few forms of culture, from which it still is possible to obtain a comprehensive representation, and which altogether constitute a firm and natural whole. Further, Birket-Smith applied for collections which could illustrate the cultural-historic development and the adaption of the culture to the environment, and which represented the main forms of the culture of trade.

Haslund-Christensen had become convinced of the value of co-operating with professional researchers in the field, as he had experienced when he was a member of Hedin's expedition. This experience became most useful in the planning of a third expedition to Central Asia. The material results of the two expeditions in the 1930s became the famous Mongol Collection of the National Museum in Copenhagen.

During the war years 1940-1945, Haslund-Christensen registered his collections from the expeditions in the 1930s at the National Museum and was preparing for a third expedition to take place after the war. Also at the museum, Birket-Smith systematically planned the collecting in the field of ethnographical artefacts which this next expedition to Central Asia was hopefully to bring back to Denmark. At the museum, Siiger became a co-worker and secretary for Haslund-Christensen who together with Kaare Grønbech – then an assistant professor at the university – was organizing the coming expedition and securing its financing. Already from 1944 onwards, Siiger had widened his scientific education with studies of the Tibetan language and shamanism, guided by Kaare Grønbech. As Haslund-Christensen began to select scientific co-workers, he asked Halfdan Siiger to take part in the coming expedition; a proposal which Siiger accepted. So, from August 1945, Siiger was in fact occupied full-time with the extensive preparations for the expedition – alongside of his above-mentioned work as a schoolteacher on a contract basis.

Haslund-Christensen's intention was to connect his own field investigations in Mongolia and Manchuria with earlier Danish ethnological research in Western Asia. His plans of including scientists from the natural sciences in this next expedition were important. Their task would be to carry out specific research in the field in accordance with their professional qualifications. The sciences of Botany, Zoology, Ornithology, Geography, Cultural Geography, Geology, Ethnology and History of Religions were thus represented at different stages of the expedition. Siiger's main task in this period was to write applications for financial support from foundations and private companies. The King of Denmark, Christian X, gave his gracious approval so that the expedition was placed under royal patronage with Prince Axel as president. Kaare Grønbech became the head of the expedition in Denmark, assisted by a group of scientists in the expedition committee. Among these was Kaj Birket-Smith, representing the ethnographic section of the expedition.

Again, the Carlsberg Foundation granted the greater part of the funding for the Haslund-Christensen expedition, and the Danish government gave subsidies to be used for buying artefacts for the National Museum. Financial support also

came from the city council of Aarhus, which in return expected a number of the collected artefacts to be placed in the Prehistoric Museum of Aarhus. The East Asiatic Company offered free transport by sea for the members of the expedition, their equipment and vehicles, as well as the collections later to come. A lot of required expedition material was delivered by private Danish companies and factories. Also Danes living abroad came to support this expedition, financially and otherwise. However, political and military circumstances made it impossible to visit many of the places – for instance Tibet – to which Haslund-Christensen had wanted to go. The expedition therefore had to limit its work to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

As mentioned earlier Halfdan Siiger was engaged as one of the members of the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia. He was to join the first team of researchers. Two other members were cand.med., Dr.Phil. Knud Paludan, zoologist and physician, and Lennart Edelberg, M.Sc., botanist and ethnographer. Together with Henning Haslund-Christensen, these three researchers left Denmark in October 1947 on board a cargo ship from the Danish East Asiatic Company. They came to India where they travelled over Calicut to Bombay,¹¹ and from there on to Karachi in the new state of Pakistan.



Grom village, Rokmo valley. Chitral, NW Pakistan in the spring, 1948.

¹¹ The name of the city Bombay has since been changed to “Mumbai”.

From Karachi, the Danish team travelled by train to Peshawar in northern Pakistan, and onwards by lorry across the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan. In Kabul the expedition established headquarters for the winter. Other Danish researchers – representing different disciplines – planned to follow later. Siiger mentions in his Preliminary Report (1956) how representatives of the Afghan Government welcomed the expedition members. During the following winter months, Edelberg and Paludan planned their coming work in cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Education and with the president of the University of Kabul (ibid.:7).

At the same time, Siiger prepared his own journey, going first to north-western Pakistan where he was to work among mountain peasants in the principality of Chitral, in the Hindu Kush mountain range.

Siiger's Research in Chitral

Siiger writes in his “Ethnological Field-Research in Chitral, Sikkim, and Assam. Preliminary Report” (1956):

During my participation in this mission I concentrated on studies of cultural and religious problems and collected specimens of typical ordinary material culture for the National Museum, Copenhagen. I never made any kind of archeological excavations.

Siiger goes on:

It was my intention to investigate a couple of indigenous cultures of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan areas. The mountain cultures in these regions attracted my attention in particular because it seemed probable to find old, unknown ways of life still flourishing in many of the remote, secluded mountain valleys, and because these cultures might retain many old traits of Indian and Central Asian influences. Both from a functional and a historical point of view, they would be fields where a student of ethnology and comparative religion might find much of importance.

The choice fell first on the Kalash or Black Kafirs of Chitral, the last remainder of the once mighty Kafir culture of former Kafiristan, the scattered and variegated information available concerning their old habits of life being most promising for field-research. As Edelberg and Paludan intended to investigate Nuristan (Kafiristan), our studies would in this way cover the old Kafir areas.

The Lepcha of Sikkim were to be my second field. A group of this people of indigenous mountaineers has for many years lived in a secluded district (Jongu), where they have been able to keep up many of their old traditions.

Before returning home, my mission was prolonged, and I got an opportunity to go to Assam in order to visit the Boro. I was glad to round off my studies among a people of the plains because I hereby came to know indigenous Indian life of quite another type.

Whenever possible, I made anthropological observations and took anthropometrical measurements according to instructions given by Dr. Kurt Brøste, the late head of the Anthropological Institute of the University of Copenhagen. The material collected will be dealt with by the Anthropological Institute, and will be published separately. (Siiger, 1956:7-8).

So much for now from Siiger's Preliminary Report.

What were Siiger's working procedures as established before the departure from Denmark? What was, for instance, the possible use of anthropometrical measurements? Anthropometrical measurements have been used in theoretical considerations regarding great migrations in prehistoric time. In the eastern part of Himalaya, such migrations might have taken place from the north, through the large river valleys, according to the English researcher H. Risley (1901). Judging from linguistic evidence, certain immigrants have populated at first Assam and later both Northern Burma and the larger part of Tibet, from where they have spread into Sikkim. Physio-anthropological measurements of living descendants (1950) of original immigrants might be included in the determination of the geographical extension of certain groups speaking particular languages in the areas examined.

In the winter of 1947-1948, Edelberg and Paludan prepared their coming travels to north-eastern Afghanistan, into the former "Kafiristan", now Nuristan. From the early spring, they were able to carry out research in botany and ornithology in this mountainous area. Beside this, Edelberg had by Haslund-Christensen been prompted to carry out ethnographic studies and collect artefacts alongside his botanical tasks proper. This inspiration from Haslund-Christensen became of decisive importance for Edelberg who came to work with the Hindu Kush culture for the rest of his life. As mentioned, Siiger was to go to the north-western Pakistan and study the Kalash population in the mountainous area, east of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border.

Why had Haslund-Christensen and Birket-Smith – and thus Siiger, too – considered the Kalash of Chitral to be a particularly important population to study? This was due to a British colonel – in fact an intelligence officer – Reginald C.F. Schomberg, who in 1935 had travelled in the border region of Chitral. At that time, Chitral was ruled by a prince – the Mehtar – who had British political advisers at his disposal together with smaller armed forces led by British officers.

In the summer of 1935, Schomberg's professional task was to observe the activities of the German Hindukush Expedition, which had travelled through Afghanistan and via Nuristan paid a visit into the border area of Chitral. Here the German researchers and spies met the Kalash population – as did Schomberg.

Schomberg's book *Kafirs and Glaciers* (London 1938) gives a fair impression of the Kalash social and religious life as an ethnic minority.

Later, Schomberg met with Haslund-Christensen and informed him of the Kalash people and their old polytheistic religion, looking so strange when compared with the surrounding Islam. Schomberg suggested that the Kalash should be investigated by a competent researcher when opportunity arose, because of the peculiar customs and activities found there. The Kalash were especially interesting, as they were practically unexplored in a scientific sense, and with their old habits of life most promising for field research.

The Kalash people were then only known from about eight pages in a report on language in North-West India, published by the Norwegian linguist Dr. Georg Morgenstierne (1892-1978) after his visit to Chitral in 1929 (Morgenstierne 1932), and from short mentions in travel books; and also in a chapter by Dr. Albert Herrlich, member of the German Hindukush Expedition 1935 (Herrlich 1938), and in the above-mentioned book by Schomberg.

In Chitral, 1948

In 1948, in the Kalash area of Chitral, one of Siiger's primary tasks was the scientific collecting for the National Museum objects representing the local (i.e. Kalash) material culture. Siiger considered it his responsibility and goal to research what it meant to be a Kalash – socially, materially, culturally, and religiously – by using Kaare Grønbech's method in which description is the basis for explanation. Texts by Schomberg and by Morgenstierne gave practical inspiration to Siiger, who afterwards came to co-operate with the great Norwegian linguist regarding questions

of the language of the Kalash. So when Siiger worked out a plan for the fieldwork, he used information on villages, population, religion, and shrines from the book by Schomberg. Besides this, Morgenstierne's early publications on the Kalash language became very valuable for Siiger in his preparations for this fieldwork.

Siiger's list of ethnographic studies deals with natural conditions, topography, habitation, social statistics, ways of life, nutrition, hygiene and sickness, dress, jewellery and weapons, social conditions, economy, judicial system, calendar, daily life, phases of life, upbringing and education, life and autobiographies, sport and games, plays, languages, history and traditions, stories, songs, proverbs, as well as music, religion and superstition, including forms of holiness, feasts and



Zoshi in Rokmo. Quat Shah drumming. The dance is in the Cha rhythm.

dances, myths and legends, taboos, ideas about the world; and beside this also morals and customs, art, character of the people, etc.

All these themes are mentioned to convey an idea of the many areas which Siiger was expected to be able to cover during his fieldwork. Out of all this, Siiger found that the main purpose of his work in Chitral was to investigate the society in function, collect museum specimens from the typical Kalash material culture, and to be on the lookout for: 1) functional issues, 2) historical issues, including immigration, 3) cultivation of wine, 4) the *Budalak* institution, 5) ecstatic institutions, 6) religious connection with Hinduism, and 7) the art of wood-carving.

Observations of the village area and surroundings with unholy (secular) and holy (sacred) areas became another important way to identify the visible and invisible realities of the Kalash life.

Among his other preparations, Siiger had worked out a "questionnaire" to use when acquiring ethnographical objects. This list was created for gathering information about the object, the owner, the manufacturer of the object, the provenance, facts about cut, shape, color, and decoration, and not least the object's connections with sociology, medicine, history and tradition, religion and morality – and folklore and superstition.

Besides Siiger's primary task, namely collecting certain typical and representative ethnographic artefacts for the National Museum, he also had to carry out another most important and time-consuming task – that of making anthropological measurements of inhabitants of the places he visited. This kind of activity – which other members of the expedition also carried out in their respective places of research – was meant to add new information to the science of Physical Anthropology, intending to describe the peoples of the Earth, and give knowledge of possible routes of migration in Asia. For this purpose, Siiger not only had to arrange a systematic gathering of men in Kalash villages and in Chitral Town, but he also had to fill out special forms with 52 blank spaces on each, recording the observations and measurements of the body of each person, giving both metrical and non-metrical data. These activities of physical-anthropological investigation were frustrating for the local population – as well as for the researcher himself. This duty also exerted an unhappy influence on Siiger's intentions to collect artefacts and information in the three Kalash valleys.

Siiger also met with other problems when he carried out his very first fieldwork in the Hindu Kush area. Lacking training in linguistics, he was unable to take down in writing the local language and record his knowledge of it in any

phonetic transcription. In addition, Siiger had to carry out an amount of administrative work during his fieldwork, throughout the expedition. This began in Chitral, where the writing of many official letters, reports etc. had to be carried out, beside the type-writing of the field notes in his camp.

In Chitral Siiger was assisted by Mahmud Isa, a local guide and interpreter who served the foreign guests of the Mehtar (the Prince of Chitral), and by a young Khowar nobleman, Wazir Ali Shah. Shah, then serving as a secretary at the court of the Mehtar, had been placed at Siiger's disposal for two periods of his stay in the Kalash area. Shah not only served as an interpreter from Khowar (his mother tongue) into English, but he also took down in writing a lot of the information obtained by the three men jointly when working with local informants of the Kalash villages. When Siiger, Shah and Isa worked with these informants, Isa would translate from Kalashamun into Khowar, which Shah could write down directly or take the information down in English. The three of them worked together in the northern Kalash valley Rumbur/Rokmo and in the central valley of Bumboret/Mumuret. Both valleys were under the political authority of the Mehtar. Siiger spent the greater part of his Chitral period in the Rumbur valley. It must be added that Shah was not continuously together with Siiger and Isa in the two northern valleys. From time to time, he had to go back to Chitral Town because of duties at the Mehtar's court. The third – and southern – valley, Birir/Birev, was under the rule of a Chitrali nobleman. Therefore, during the last part of his fieldwork, Siiger had to work there with Isa alone.

Landscape and settlement

The typical Kalash village as Siiger found it had flat-roofed houses, built with wooden beams and stones and plastered with clay. The houses were aligned like the steps of a staircase up the mountain-slopes above the valley, in the bottom of which ran a river between cultivated fields on both sides.

The rivers were lined with watermills, where Kalasha women would grind their grain for baking the flat loaves which were the daily bread (*chupatti*). The uppermost buildings of the village were goat "houses" which not only functioned as stables for the animals in fall and winter, but also represented the border of the upper part of the landscape, where females for religious reasons had no access.

With the Kalash

Siiger's main informants in Rumbur were an official, legal leader, the *aksakal* Quwat Shah, and the religious leader, Lamtson. They informed Siiger and Shah about settlements, family houses, other buildings, daily life and yearly routines, calendar systems and seasons, the climate and the dangerous floods. Another important theme was the lifecycle with its habits and ceremonies regarding marriage, wedding, childbirth, adultery, betrothal, divorce, death, and burial. A special honour was bestowed upon a deceased man of great merit: A wooden statue representing this person was carved and placed in the burial grounds outside the village. Other information concerned social organisation and conditions, lineages, genealogies and ancestors.

Underlying the normal life of the people was a "traditional history" of the Kalash area, originally including the almost mythical immigration from the west into the Rumbur and Bumboret valleys which – as related in older sources – were inhabited by dwarf-like people who lived as hunters and gatherers. As far as Siiger was informed, the land of the Rumbur valley was originally apportioned to the first four families settling there. Beside such issues, Siiger and Shah also collected several versions of the Kalash people's history, including myths about the creation of the world and even a story about Adam and Eve.

In former times, the Kalash had controlled a larger area than what they did in 1948. Siiger dates the Kalash rule of Chitral back to sometime before the year 1500. Later, the Kalash lost power over the country and were forced into the narrow mountain valleys by the Kho people.

Anyway, here in the three valleys, the Kalash made a living for themselves with terraced, irrigated fields, tended by women during the summer. Wheat, maize, and millet were among the cereals in the fields. Walnuts and mulberries were harvested from trees. Grapes – for making wine – were also grown and collected.

The women tended sheep and cattle, which did not enter the alpine pastures where shepherds and young boys tended goats from the villages during the summer. Goat's cheese was an important food as was *ghee* – a kind of liquid butter, made from goat's milk. These two kinds of food were – together with men's feudal services – even used for paying taxes to the Mehtar and the nobleman of Birir respectively.

The religious festivals were also important with prayers, songs, dances, and music from flutes and drums. Siiger also observed ceremonial offerings and sac-



Zoshi in Rokmo. The Daginai dance.

rifices at open-air shrines. These activities were connected with the pantheon of gods, among them *Khodai*, *Mahandeo*, *Warin*, *Praba*, *Sajigor*, and a goddess, *Jestak*. This goddess was the only deity with a roofed temple building which was found in several villages. The male gods had various kinds of open-air shrines outside the villages. In the fields one would find shrines for local spirits, called *Jach*. Invisible beings called *Suchi* were living in the highest mountains. They cared for the goats grazing on the alpine pastures. Strict rules had to be followed by the shepherds there in order not to harm the *Suchi*.

A fundamental characteristic of the Kalash society was the different positions of men and women. The relative positions of the two sexes were organised around two opposites: *onjesta* (ritually pure) and *pragata* (ritually impure). This fact became important for Siiger, as it appeared to be a key to understanding the culture of the whole society and its relations to the outside world. Siiger found

that the Kalash viewed the whole Kalash country as pure, while the surrounding Islamic country was impure. This meant for instance that when some Kalash men had to go to Chitral Town on official tasks, they became impure. Therefore, they would infect the Kalash valleys with impurity when they came back home, unless they were ritually cleaned.

The Kalash village as a whole was considered less pure than the mountain areas above the village. There was an invisible line between the lower areas – the fields and the village buildings located below the goat stables – and the higher area, from the goat stables and upwards. No woman was normally allowed to cross the border uphill. Thus, women had no access to the goat stables, built above the family houses on the sloping mountain sides. In principle, no women had access at all to the areas above the village, except in connection to one special task in the spring.¹²

Outside the village – preferably close to the river running through the valley – the women's house – the *bashali* – was placed. During menstruation and when giving birth, the women had to stay in the women's house for a certain period of time. Ritual cleaning ceremonies had to take place before these women could return to their family houses.

In the family houses, the space between the fireplace (in the centre of the room) and the back wall had a pure or sacred quality, especially for grown-up women, and was thus protected by strict precautions.

Women and men, as well as children, took part in activities in the roofed temple in the village, the *Jestak'han*. But only boys and men had access to the open-air shrines, mostly situated above or at least outside the villages. A most important religious person in the traditional Kalash society was the *dehar*. As Siiger observed, the *dehar* acted as an ecstatic prophet, being initiated by invisible voices during sacrifices at shrines. The *dehar* was called for when someone fell ill, and he would find out which supernatural power had been insulted and what had to be done to propitiate it. Beside such activities, a *dehar* could also have dreams about the future.

12 On a certain day during springtime, the Kalash shepherds, accompanied by men and boys, walked with the goats up to the alpine pastures. On this occasion, some women as well as men had to go up into this area. There was so much equipment, food, etc. to be carried up there that women had to take part in this task, although the area was ordinarily off-limits to them, being reserved for men and boys – and the *Suchi*. (My own information from Chitral in 1990.)



The shrine of Mahandeo in Rokmo with the symbols of Balumain's horses' heads.

Back to Kabul

Siiger and Isa succeeded in buying many and good artefacts which were packed up and later brought to the Danish Mission in Mardan by Siiger and from there on to Kabul. Siiger had at that point spent more than three months (end of March – beginning of July) in Chitral proper. He came back to Kabul at the end of July 1948.

During his work in Chitral, Siiger regularly sent detailed reports to Haslund-Christensen in Kabul, for instance on the collecting of museum objects. In the meantime, the leader of the expedition himself bought ethnographic artefacts in and around Kabul and Kandahar and packed these objects into wooden boxes.

However, Haslund-Christensen suffered from failing health and finally became unable to work. In August 1948 the members of the expedition gathered in Kabul where Haslund-Christensen's health was still deteriorating. He died on September 13th and was buried in Kabul.

The new working conditions meant among other things that Lennart Edelberg had to take care of the ethnographic tasks in Afghanistan, not least in Nuristan, which he visited twice more during 1949.¹³

In 1948 Siiger, too, continued his fieldwork. He went to Sikkim where he studied the Lepcha population during the period January – October 1949.

Siiger's last fieldwork took place in Assam where, based in the local Santal Mission, he worked among the mixed local population, especially the Boros. This study lasted from the end of October 1949 until the end of January 1950.

After the fieldwork in Assam, Siiger returned to Kalimpong where his collections from the Lepcha and from visits to Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Sikkim were stored. Here, Siiger did the final packing of the artefacts for the National Museum in Copenhagen, including the objects from the Boro, donated by a local Danish missionary Rev. A. Kristiansen.

Afterwards, Siiger travelled by train to Calcutta. After a flight to Colombo, he boarded a Danish cargo ship, again from the East Asiatic Company. Siiger arrived in Denmark by ship in April 1950.

The Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia continued for years, following the plans laid out by Henning Haslund-Christensen. New scientists, for instance botanists, went to Afghanistan, and geologists carried out research in the Himalaya mountains.

The Henning Haslund-Christensen Memorial Expedition

In 1957 Siiger and Ferdinand already knew each other. When in 1952 Edelberg and Ferdinand planned to go to Afghanistan on the "Henning Haslund-Christensen Memorial Expedition" (1953-1955), Siiger was also asked to take part in

¹³ Nuristan was earlier known as "Kafiristan" ("Land of Infidels" – i.e. non-believers in Islam); an area which was outside of Afghan rule. In the 1890s, the Afghan Emir in Kabul sent an army into this "pagan" area, which after a long battle conquered the "Kafirs". The surviving "pagans" were forced to convert to Islam.

the expedition, but declined because of his family (personal communication between Siiger and the author of this chapter).

Prince Peter of Greece and to Denmark was the leader of the Memorial Expedition. Edelberg and Ferdinand carried out valuable fieldwork in Afghanistan as part of the Memorial Expedition, not least in the mountainous Nuristan (“Land of Light” – i.e. the Light of Islam) in the north-eastern part of the country.

The photographer Peter Rasmussen not only took photos – colour and black/white – but also shot more than 4000 metres of 16 mm colour film, thus documenting daily life in the former Kafirstan. He worked in Afghanistan until December 1953. Edelberg took part in the expedition as ethnographer and botanist until June 1954.¹⁴

Later, Edelberg came to work with Dr Schuyler Jones, then a lecturer at the University of Oxford and assistant curator at the Department of Ethnology and Prehistory, Pitt Rivers Museum. Based upon their respective fieldworks in Afghanistan, Edelberg and Jones published a large volume titled: *Nuristan* (1979).

The last publication by Lennart Edelberg, *Nuristani Buildings* (1984), was published three years after Edelberg’s death. It became possible for a group of people who were academically and personally close to Edelberg to complete the manuscript supplying additional texts and photos. This group included architect Birthe Stubsgård, senior lecturer Klaus Ferdinand at the Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology at Aarhus University, and Head of the Ethnographic Collections of Moesgaard Museum, Torkil Funder, lecturer in Geography and Biology at Ribe Katedralskole and Schuyler Jones, with whom Edelberg had published the book “Nuristan” just two years prior to his death.

1950-1960: Siiger’s museum career and publications

In 1950, even before Siiger came back to Denmark, he had been employed as assistant keeper at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. Besides the museum work, he began writing on the research carried out in Central and South Asia. One title, presented six years later, was Siiger’s preliminary report on eth-

nographical field research in Chitral, Sikkim, and Assam, which he undertook as a member of the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia.

In the 1950s, Siiger cooperated with the great Norwegian linguist Dr. Georg Morgenstierne, who in 1929 had studied the Kalash language in Chitral. In 1951, he and Siiger went through Siiger’s written material from the Kalash society. Morgenstierne picked out some of Siiger’s material that would be useful to him for his manuscript on the Kalash language. In return, he assisted Siiger by correcting the spelling of many Kalash words. Furthermore, Morgenstierne gave Siiger photos and information on the Kalash, collected during his own studies in Chitral in 1929.

In the late 1950s, Siiger began writing a manuscript for the first scientific report on the Kalash, now not only based on the research in Chitral in 1948, as he had also, in addition, prepared new written information on this people collected by Wazir Ali Shah, who visited the two Kalash valleys several times from 1948 until about 1970, to obtain more required information and send it to Siiger via mail.

From Siiger’s bibliography we know, too, that 23 shorter texts regarding his fieldwork and museum activity were published during the ten years when he worked at the National Museum in Copenhagen.

Also during the 1950s, Siiger began preparing a large manuscript on religious practise of the Lepcha people of Sikkim. Here he had worked with a population less isolated than the Kalash, which had also been studied by researchers before. Siiger even came to co-operate with one of the researchers then working in Kalimpong, the British linguist Dr. Reginald Sprigg. Siiger’s work on the Lepcha material, however, took years. Dr. Ling. Jørgen Rischel yielded a most competent work on phonetic transcription of Lepcha ritual texts collected by Siiger. The first two volumes on the Lepchas of Sikkim came out in 1967, published by the National Museum in Copenhagen. Siiger’s third volume on the Lepchas was found as a manuscript after his death in 1999.

According to Siiger’s wish when he left Aarhus and moved to Copenhagen, I placed his research archives, including field notes, photos, correspondence, manuscripts, etc. on the Lepcha and on the Boro at the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum in Copenhagen. Here, Siiger’s artefact collections from Sikkim and Assam were already registered and kept.

A few years later, the Dutch linguist Dr. Heleen Plaisier found Siiger’s unpublished Lepcha material at the National Museum. We began cooperation, and now Dr. Plaisier is preparing a most competent text on this material for publication (see the chapter by Dr. Plaisier on Siiger’s Lepcha work in this volume.)

¹⁴ This was followed by Lennart and Margot Edelbergs shorter research travels to Nuristan in 1964 and 1970, accompanied respectively by their daughters Susanne and Miriam as well as by Ulf Timmerman.

The research in Chitral and Sikkim were also Siiger's basic subjects when he gave papers at international conferences, which he did in 1955 (Vienna), in 1971 (Tokyo), and in 1975 (Leiden).

Siiger as professor at Aarhus University

In 1960, Siiger ended his museum career at the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen when he was appointed Professor of History of Religions (i.e. non-Christian religions) at Aarhus University. It was a new chair, and Siiger therefore had to build up the curriculum literally from scratch, including organising the building, hiring faculty staff and assistants, acquiring books for the new institute, preparing lectures, instructing students, etc. Siiger was the head of this institute until his retirement in 1979.

Beside this great work of Siiger's, he came to play an important role in the development which not only placed the science of ethnography within the new university in Aarhus, but also through the years combined this with a new museum in Jutland. This museum – Moesgaard – came to cover both Danish prehistory, medieval times, and ethnography.

When Siiger came to Aarhus University, he brought with him not only his knowledge of history of religions and of modern Asian religions, but also his museum qualifications. To this could be added Siiger's personal experience of the value of fieldwork in ethnographic research. Siiger also met again with mag.scient. Klaus Ferdinand (1926-2005) who since 1957 had been employed at Aarhus University as first lecturer in the science of Ethnography.

The importance of ethnographic fieldwork

As both Ferdinand and Siiger had rich experience from their respective fieldworks, they could discuss and agree upon the importance of this method in the early 1960s when Ferdinand was to form an academic curriculum for the university study of Ethnography at Aarhus University. So fieldwork was prescribed for future ethnographic students at this university (personal information from Siiger to the author). Ferdinand's early fieldwork was later followed by equal activities in Afghanistan as well as in Qatar and Bahrain in the Arabic Gulf.

At Aarhus University, students of Ethnography and Social Anthropology were first and foremost trained by Ferdinand, who through the years had built up a network of local persons in Afghanistan – some in important social positions – who assisted him and his students when on fieldwork. This of course led to both information and the acquiring of ethnographic artefacts for the Prehistoric Museum in Aarhus.

In 1963 Ethnography was established as a discipline at Aarhus University. Ferdinand's work in establishing the MA in Ethnography was then followed by a post as Head of Department of this discipline. Klaus Ferdinand writes: "...this being argued for to secure my continued connection to the university, especially as responsible for the Ethnographic Study Collection. At the same time, the institute was at once re-named as Institute for Prehistoric Archeology and Ethnography, ... in my employment at the museum, I now became manager of its ethnographic department" (Ferdinand, 1999:37 – my translation).

It should be added that since 1963, the ethnographic collections of this museum were extended by many "new collections from enthusiastic and capable students of Ethnography" (cited from Ferdinand *ibid.*:42 – my translation).

1989 – Co-operation between Halfdan Siiger and Svend Castenfeldt

In 1989, I myself came to work with Siiger in order to include his archives from the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia in the Ethnographic Research Archive at Aarhus University, Moesgaard. From 1989 on, I had the unique opportunity to cooperate practically with Siiger when the 1970 exhibitions in the Ethnographic Hall at Moesgaard Museum were changed.

The new exhibition became a success, although it showed the conditions in the Hindu Kush as they were when the artefacts were collected in Central Asia from 1948 until 1970, as also the former exhibition had done. However, Cand.Mag. Mytte Fentz, medieval archeologist and ethnographer from Moesgaard, put up her own exhibition of more than 125 enlarged colour photos from the Kalash in Chitral, complete with texts, in the Ethnographic Hall. These actual photos were made by Mytte Fentz and Torben Stroyer, a professional photographer. Thus, the level of information really improved. The museum guests could receive reasonable answers when asking: How do these mountain people live today? The exhi-

bition remained in the hall for ten years – longer than even competent keepers had considered it to be of interest for museum guests. It was removed at the turn of the century – this time without Halfdan Siiger.

From 1989, I also had the pleasure to assist Siiger in preparing his large manuscript on the old Kalash society for publication. Until Siiger's death in 1999, he and I worked on this important manuscript based upon his and Wazir Ali Shah's field notes from 1948 and their correspondence from 1948-1970 – this remains a work in progress to this day.

The second Hindu Kush Cultural Conference

The second Hindu Kush Cultural Conference was held in NW Pakistan in 1990. Twenty years after the Hindu Kush conference held in Aarhus a second conference was arranged in Chitral proper by Anjuman-e-Taraqqi Khovar, Chitral. Mytte Fentz and I took part in this conference together with other Western researchers and educated locals from schools and the Peshawar University.

With Linguists to Chitral – and the Third Hindu Kush Cultural Conference

In 1995, invitations arrived at Moesgaard from local cultural organisations in the North-Western Frontier Province of Pakistan, to attend “The Third International Hindu Kush Cultural Conference” in August. I went to Chitral earlier, together with the Danish linguists, Professor Dr. Jørgen Rischel and his students Ida E. Mørch and Jan Heegård. The linguists came to study the Kalash language, Kalashamon, and they were assisted by the local school teacher Engineer Khan, functioning as guide and interpreter. Engineer Khan could also translate into English several of the prayers and songs to the gods written down by Siiger in Rumbur and Bumboret valleys in 1948, but never before translated. This cooperation between ethnographers and linguists turned out to be most rewarding for the scientific progress, as Siiger had foreseen. Siiger had learned an important lesson that one single researcher could not cover all the fields found for example in the Kalash society; cooperation – especially with linguists – was necessary.



Siiger at the re-opening of the exhibition in Moesgaard Museum, 1988.

Siiger was very satisfied with the research results from the linguistic fieldwork carried out by Jan Heegård and Ida E. Mørch. It was thus proved that Siiger's collection of Kalash songs and prayers – when properly translated – identified connections between the Kalash in Rumbur and Bumboret in 1948, and certain locations in Lower Chitral where Kalash had formerly been living. These lower areas, more fertile than the three mountain valleys, had been occupied by the invading Kho people. Their language is Khovar; the language of the Muslim majority in Chitral. Khovar is both a spoken and a written language. The linguists found a few old Kalash men who still were able to speak some Kalashamon. They were perhaps the last living members of an originally larger Kalash population.

In Siiger's written material from the three actual Kalash valleys, information was found regarding Kalash living in a larger area of Chitral generations ago, with connections to inhabited places outside Chitral proper and also with relations to the Kalash of Chitral. The history seems to be that through many years – a long time ago – the growing Kho population became still more dominant and might have forced the Kalash minority away from the fertile collateral valleys of the larger Chitral river valley, also green and fertile.

Through the following years assistant professor Jan Heegård (PhD) and Ida Elisabeth Mørch (Cand.Mag.) worked in detail with linguistic problems related to the former prevalence of Kalashamon in Chitral.

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About the author

Svend Castenfeldt, ethnographer and social anthropologist, has worked in mountain peasant societies in Europe and in Central Asia. As Halfdan Siiger archivist, Castenfeldt has taken care of the unpublished material in Siigers's archive at Moesgaard Museum. Castenfeldt is also preparing the final publication on "The Old Kalash Society".

6. Linguistic and Genetic Roots of the Kalasha

Peter Bakker & Aymeric Daval-Markussen

Halfdan Siiger's work on the Kalasha is quite central to his œuvre. Our own knowledge of the Kalasha and their language is, of course, much more limited – and almost exclusively second hand. Bakker's interest in Kalasha was mostly triggered by meeting Taj Khan Kalash on several occasions when he was in Aarhus in 2008 and 2009/2010 for lectures and to work on Siiger's manuscript on the Kalasha with Svend Castenfeldt. Bakker has a long-term interest in the Romani language, as spoken by the Gypsies in Europe (cf. Bakker 1997); both Bakker and Daval-Markussen were until 2014 involved in the Romident project on Romani language and identity, financed by HERA/Joint Research Program and FP7. Romani is a language that originates in South Asia and therefore relatively closely related to Kalasha, as both languages belong to the Indic-Iranian-Dardic branch of the Indo-European language family. Kalasha belongs to the Dardic branch, whereas Romani belongs to the Indic branch, but Romani shares some clear common traits with the Dardic languages, probably because of early language contact (Matras 2002:28, 33, 45, 113, 149-150; see also Bakker 1997 for a lexical comparison).

In this paper we will try to contextualize the Kalasha and their language, from different perspectives. Linguistically, we will discuss Kalasha both in the context of surrounding languages, the languages with which Kalasha has the most in common, and also possible connections to Greek and the Slavonic languages. Both Greek and Balkan Slavic have been claimed to show particularly close bonds with Kalasha. Greek, Indic-Dardic-Iranian and Slavonic languages are all part of the Indo-European language family, which means that they descend from one language spoken 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. The Indo-European languages descend from Proto-Indo-European, an undocumented but partially reconstructable language once spoken probably in Western Asia. Its living branches

are, from west to east, Celtic, Romance, Germanic, Baltic-Slavonic, Albanian, Greek, Armenian, and Indo-Iranian (including Dardic). Kalasha belongs to the Indo-Iranian-Dardic branch of Indo-European, whereas Greek is a separate branch of Indo-European.

It has been claimed that the European languages Greek and Slavonic asserted influence on Kalasha some 2,400 years ago, or that Balkan Slavic or Greek are more closely related with Kalasha than could be expected simply in terms of deep level common antecedents in the Indo-European language family.

Also interesting in this respect is the genetic perspective. We will take a look at the genetic data, also partly to see whether it sheds light on closer connections with Southeast Europeans. Genetic phenotypes found among the Kalasha – manifesting themselves in lighter eye, hair and skin colour among some of them – distinguish the population in the area from the general population of Pakistan. We will also consider genetic data in connection with linguistic data. Some limited but quite fascinating data is available from the Kalasha and their genetic connections with other populations in South Asia and the rest of the world.

We will do this by embedding this study in new lines of research on the spreading of languages and populations.

2. Linguistics, genetics and the spread of language

Recently, and especially in the last few decades, a new line of investigation has developed on the spread of languages, and the spread of populations, on the basis of human genes. Cavalli-Forza's work (e.g. 1994), among others, on connections between genes and languages triggered this research. Both genetics (molecular biology) and languages can shed light on this question. The Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig was established with special focus on these issues, combining research in human genetics, linguistics, and primate research. The EUROCORES Program "On the Origin of Man, Language and Languages" OMLL, from 2001 to 2007) also stimulated research in this area. The availability of worldwide databases on linguistics, such as the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (Haspelmath et al. 2005) and the updated online version WALS online of 2011 (wals.info), along with DNA databases of world populations (e.g. <http://alfred.med.yale.edu/alfred/>), assist researchers in reconstructing

population migrations and detecting connections between languages at a much greater time depth than hitherto possible. In 2010 a new journal dealing with these issues, from a linguistic perspective, was launched with the title *Language Dynamics and Change* (2010ff.).

There is of course no direct correlation between language and genes. One can easily shift languages, but one cannot shift one's DNA. Not only individuals, but also groups of speakers of certain languages can shift to other languages without changing their genetic make-up, e.g. African Americans speak a language originating from the British Isles. However, migration will normally lead to genetic changes in a group who settled in a new location, due to gene flow and contact with local populations, while the language may be preserved (see, for instance, for Roma and Romani, Bakker 2009, 2012).

Both languages and genes evolve, with or without contact. One of the challenges in genetics and linguistics is to sort out which traits or signals can be traced to common descent of species and languages, and which ones are due to contact. Populations inherit part of their genes from their ancestor populations, and, after migration, partly from other groups. The same is true for languages: languages conserve traits from the ancestor languages, and they will adopt traits from other languages, both words (borrowings, loanwords) and structural influences (see Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009 and Matras & Sakel 2007 for cross-linguistic studies on both).

Modification through descent is the evolutionary process connecting both genetic evolution and language evolution. In languages, speech sounds can evolve into other speech sounds, words can be replaced by other words, linguistic structures disappear, and new linguistic structures may emerge, replacing older structures. In humans, DNA is transmitted to children, some of it exclusively through the male line (Y-chromosome) or through the female line (mitochondrial DNA). Both shed light on the history of population groups.

3. Kalasha

The Kalasha live in what is now Northern Pakistan. The area is characterized by high linguistic diversity. Most languages in the area belong to the Indo-European language family, but to different branches of this family: there are Dardic, Iranian and Indic languages, and especially within the Dardic branch

the differences between the languages are considerable. The three branches are sometimes dealt with together as Indo-Iranian languages. The area is mountainous, and the rugged terrain may have contributed to the diversification of dialects and languages. See Kreutzmann (2005) for a language use survey of Northern Pakistan, and Morgenstierne (1973) for a grammatical description of Kalasha.

3.1. Kalasha dialects

When Siiger did his field research in the area, he made a map of Chitral. The Kalasha valleys can be found in the lower part of the map (Rambur, Bumburet, Birir).

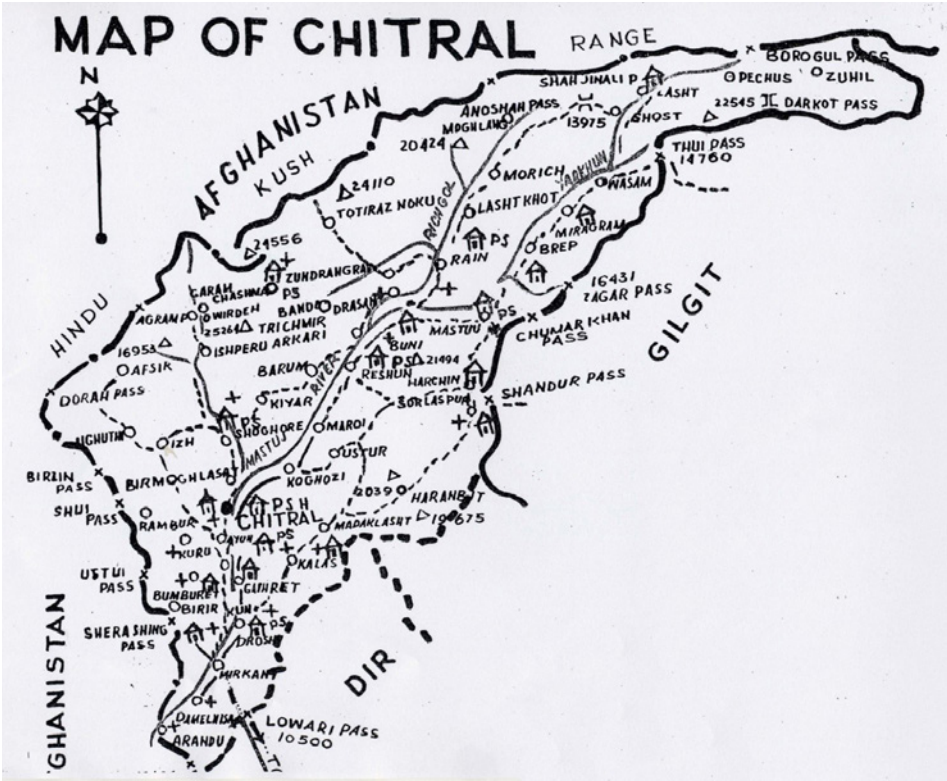


Figure 1. Map of Chitral from Siiger’s archives; Rambur, Birir and Bumburet in the southeast are Kalasha-speaking valleys.

There are a number of studies on the Kalasha language. As different aspects of Kalasha are discussed elsewhere in this volume, we will not go into detailed studies of grammatical peculiarities of the Kalasha language, only its genetic affiliations and its areal connections with other languages, i.e. traits that are shared between languages spoken in the same geographical region. We commence with Kalasha dialect variation.

Three dialects of Kalasha were compared in a study by Decker (1992a:20), as shown in Figure 2. This should be read as meaning that there is a mutual intelligibility between the varieties, or dialects, of Bumboret (Bumburet) and Birir of 89%, whereas the Urtsun variety is further off, with an intelligibility of 76% with the Bumboret and 74% with the Birir variety. This is confirmed by speakers’ comments on the inter-intelligibility of the three dialects (Decker 1992a:21), as others report that it is difficult to understand the Urtsun variety. (some information on additional varieties can be found in Mørch & Heegard 1997).

| | Bumboret | |
|--------|----------|----|
| | Birir | |
| Urtsun | 74 | 76 |

Figure 2. Lexical similarity between three Kalasha varieties (based on Decker 1992a)

3.2. Kalasha and surrounding languages

Like many languages in the southern Himalaya, Kalasha is a Dardic language. Other Dardic languages are Khowar, Phalura, Maiyā, Shina, Kashmiri, Torwali, Bashkarik, Gawar-Bati, Pashai, Wotapuri, Tirahi, Grangali, Sawi.

Many Kalasha speakers know Khowar (Dardic), the language used in the region in interethnic contacts, and Urdu, a national language of Pakistan, of the Indic branch of Indo-European. The other official language of Pakistan, English, is also used, and it belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family.

A new technique using 40 words that are known to be relatively stable has been used in a project aiming at providing a stem tree of the languages of the world. The same 40 words are collected for all the languages of the world, and a special algorithm calculates the distance between the forms of the words. In a simplified way, it takes only one step from the Dutch word “hond” /hɔnt/ to Ger-

man “Hund” /hunt/, differing in only one speech sound. The English word “dog” requires more steps to change to “hond” or “hund”, and would score a higher distance. More details about the technique can be found in Brown et al. (2008), Holman et al. (2011). The technique is called Automatic Similarity Judgment Program, or ASJP. That this procedure is not always easy to realize, can be seen in Figure 3. The words for “heart” all seem quite different, but the words in the first four languages are all cognates, i.e. they descend ultimately from one original word, whereas only the Basque word does not. In the first four words, no vowel or consonant sounds in the four words are identical, but they are all connected through regular sound changes from an original form. The Kalasha word is *hiA*, the Khowar (Dardic) word is *hardi*, the latter very close to the Germanic words (English *heart*, German *Herz*, Danish *hjerte*, Dutch *hart*, etc.), but the Romani root *ilo* is in fact more closely connected to Kalasha, as both descend from Old Indic *hṛdaya*, (Proto-Indo-European *k̑r̥ed; Romance languages have preserved the original /k/, cf. French *cœur*). Clearly the Romani form is the most deviant form of the first four, related terms.

| English | Danish | French | Romani | Basque |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| (Germanic, IE) | (Germanic, IE) | (Romance, IE) | (Indic, IE) | (isolate, non-IE) |
| ha:t | jɛ:də | kœ:ʁ | ilo | biots |

Figure 3. words for “heart” in five languages, in phonetic writing

The ASJP program appears to be quite successful in grouping the languages and subgroupings of the world, at least in identifying larger groupings. The consortium has decided to subsume the Dardic languages under Indic, but under the label “Indic”, there is a clear branch containing the Dardic languages (Figure 4).

In Figure 4, three varieties of Kalasha are given, Zugunuk (Urtsun), Korak (Birir Valley) and Krakal (Bumburet Valley). They are quite close to one another, Urtsun, again, a little more distant. In Figure 4, the shorter the horizontal branches are, the more closely related the languages are within this branching. Kalasha and Phalura are the most deviant among the Dardic languages, as shown in Figure 4: the branch from Ashret Phalura to Krakal Kalasha contains only Dardic varieties, whereas the branch beginning with Bengali (Indic) is Indic proper. However, some other Dardic languages (Kashmiri and Khowar,

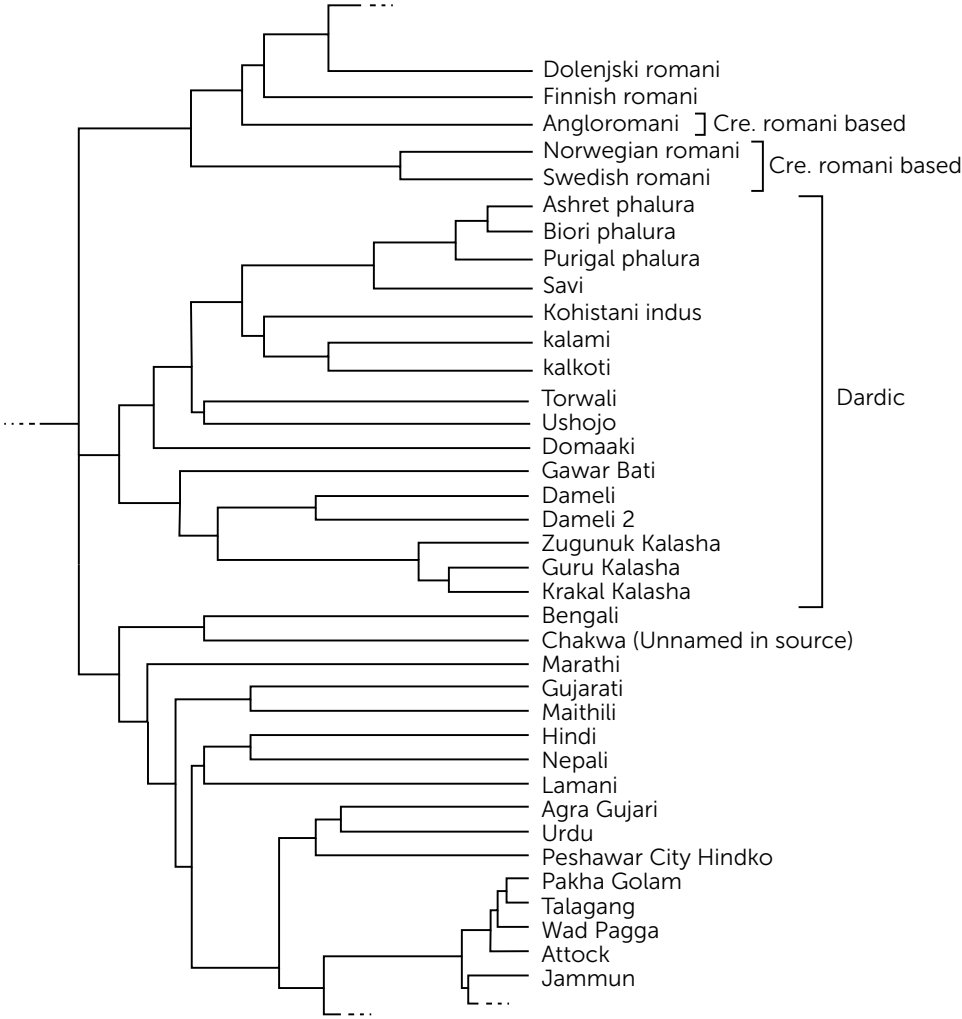


Figure 4. the position of Kalasha on the basis of stable lexicon.

Kataviri and Shekhani), are found outside the cluster (not visible in Figure 4), close to the Indic outlier language Sinhala. Since Morgenstierne suggested that Khowar and Kalasha were more closely related genetically, this idea has been often repeated, but these data do not display a very close historical connection between Khowar and Kalasha.

Kalasha is most closely connected to Dameli and Gawar Bati, and this branch is connected with Domaaki, Ushojo, Torwali, Kalkoti, Kohistani Indus, Savi, Phalura.

The branch on top of Dardic contains varieties of Romani, the language of the European Gypsies.

The ASJP program results in a very clear connection of Kalasha with the bulk of the languages of the Dardic branch of Indo-European, be it a deviant one within this branch. In fact, it also partly justifies that the Dardic languages can be considered a branch separate from the Indic languages. As in Decker’s calculation in Figure 2, the Zugunuk/Urtsun dialect is the most deviant. The datasets have overlap, but are not identical. Decker used 210 words, ASJP a 40-word subset of these.

| | Language name, Village, Location |
|-----|--|
| KSW | Khowar, Ushu, northern Swat |
| KIS | Khowar, Chatorkhand, Ishkoman Valley |
| KPN | Khowar, Pargam Nisar, near Mastuj, eastern Chitral |
| KTR | Khowar, Odir, Torkhow Valley, northern Chitral |
| KGC | Khowar, Garam Chishma, western Chitral |
| KDR | Khowar, Kesu, near Drosh, southern Chitral |
| BBK | Kalasha, Krakal, Bumboret Valley |
| BRK | Kalasha, Guru, Birir Valley |
| URK | Kalasha, Zugunuk, Urtsun Valley |
| ASP | Phalura, Ashret, south of Drosh |
| BIP | Phalura, Biori, Biori Valley, |
| PUP | Phalura, Purigal, Shishi Koh Valley |
| SSS | Sawi, Sau, Afghanistan |
| GWB | Gawar-bati, Arandu |
| DML | Dameli, Dondideri, Damel Valley |
| SHK | Shekhani, Langurbat, near Arandu |
| KAT | Eastern Kativiri, Bargromatal, Bashgal Valley, Afghanistan |
| YDG | Yidgha, Zitor, near Garam Chishma |
| MNJ | Munjani, Kali Shar, southern Munjan Valley |

Figure 5. the languages and dialects of Chitral (from Decker 1992b: 177)

We have ourselves used a networking program developed by biologists to map evolution. These network programs map not only direct descent but also suggest conflicting signals, which may indicate, in the case of languages, borrowings. These programs are being used increasingly by linguists. We have used the lexical data collected by Kenneth Decker (1992b), who published so-called Swadesh lists, standardized lists of words of ca. 200 concepts supposed to be present in all cultures, of Chitral languages. Decker collected the same set of ca. 210 words for 19 languages/dialects of Chitral (p. 178-211), providing ca. 4000 data points (there are some gaps). The languages are listed in Figure 5. We coded these data manually, by eye-balling: if the translation equivalents of a word looked as if they were the same roots, the words received the same code, a number. If they looked different, we gave them a different code. Different codes do not mean that the words are in fact unrelated; even cognates can change their forms dramatically, and forms may thus look different even when they are in fact cognates (see Table 2). For the 19 varieties included, there are between 5 and 12 non-similar roots for each of the words. This is a fairly high number for languages belonging to one branch, and this confirms the great variety within the Dardic languages.

Using a networking program sorting the data for all 19 languages, the visual result is given in Figure 6. A network like this should be read as follows. The endpoints indicate the individual languages, with abbreviations for names given in Figure 5. The shorter a line is that connects two varieties, the closer the languages are lexically (at least on the basis of these 200 words). The longer the line radiating from the centre, the more deviant the language is. Lines connecting languages “vertically” or across languages can indicate conflicting signals. Thus, this network shows three clear clusters: the three Phalura varieties (left), the three Kalasha varieties (lower left) and the Khowar varieties (lower right). Further, Yidgha and Munjani are reasonably close, and so are Kativiri and Shekhani. The language most closely connected to Phalura is Sawi of Afghanistan. Kalasha is the most deviant of the Chitral languages.

In general, the results show that the languages, except for the three dialect clusters, are in fact quite different from one another.

The next step was therefore to create a new network using only one dialect of the three dialect clusters. We arbitrarily chose one for Phalura, Kalasha and Khowar.

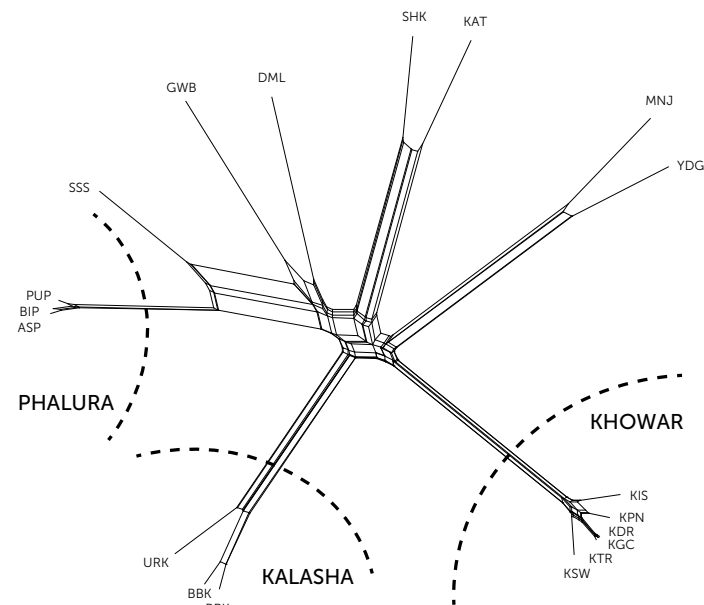


Figure 6: a network of the 19 varieties of Chitral languages.

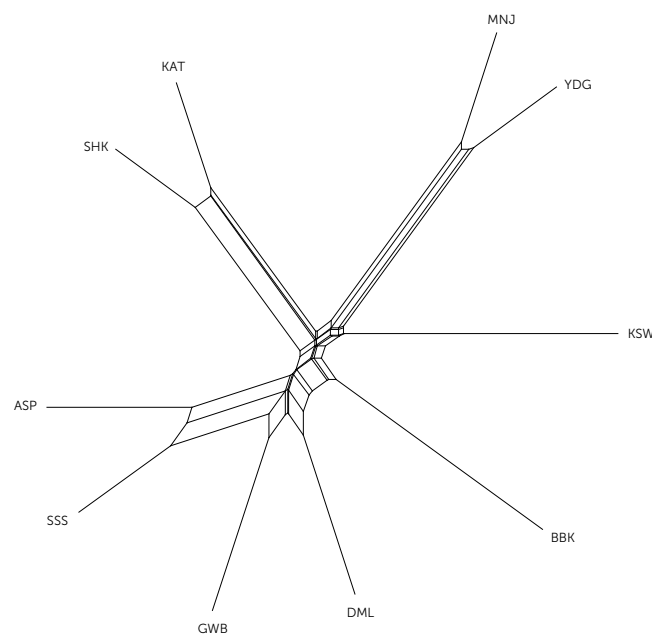


Figure 7. Network of 10 Dardic languages, including Bumburet Kalasha (lower right).

This network in Figure 7 shows that Kalasha is quite deviant from the other Chitral languages, and that in fact most Dardic languages are rather different from each other. The clusters like Kataviri/Shekhani remain visible here.

In short, the studies made on the basis of the basic vocabulary of Kalasha among the Dardic languages and the languages of Chitral, show that there is considerable variation between the Dardic languages, and that Kalasha is quite deviant from the others. On the other hand, when we contrast the Dardic languages with other languages spoken in different regions of the world, including Indic, they form a clear cluster distinct from the Indic languages, although connected with them. These results, gained by computational methods, are compatible with previous findings on these languages.

3.3. Kalasha and Greek

There is some discussion of whether Kalasha is historically related to Greek. It is true that both Kalasha and Greek are part of the Indo-European language family, and thus distantly related, having an ancestor language spoken 8,000 years ago. On the basis of these deep historical linguistic connections, where both Greek, Slavonic languages and Kalasha descend from one and the same language, one can of course expect to find similarities between the three languages, both structural and lexical: daughter languages inherited traits from the ancestor language, and they will innovate others. But the Slavonic, Greek and Dardic languages are so distantly related that the mutual intelligibility is close to zero. Kalasha is hardly more closely related to English, Spanish or Russian (also Indo-European languages) than to Greek or Bulgarian. Some of the proposed closer similarities between Greek and Kalasha go back to Proto-Indo European, whereas others do not stand up to the standards of comparative linguistics, as we will see.

Figure 8 shows a tree of Indo-European languages (from Gray & Atkinson 2003), based on lexical similarities. It was produced using advanced computer techniques developed to map evolving systems, and the Swadesh 200 word lists were used.

The tree is based on the earliest available data on Indo-European languages. Kalasha would be a descendant language of the “Vedic” branch (Vedic Sanskrit, as based on sources going back 3,000 to 3,500 years). Greek is, obviously, a descendant of the Greek branch, whose earliest sources go back 2,500 to 3,500 years. The most recent common ancestor of Kalasha and Greek can be tentatively dated by checking where in the tree the Greek and Vedic branches separate, and that is

3.5. Kalasha and Slavonic

Just as there are claims of a close connection between Greek and Kalasha, there are claims of a close connection between South Slavic languages, in particular Macedonian, and Kalasha. A website, for instance, claims “They [the Kalasha] speak the Kalash language, from the Macedonian family of Indo-Aryan Languages”. This claim is rather politicized, as Alexander came from Macedonia, and the main language of Macedonia today is Macedonian, a South Slavic language closely related to Bulgarian. Other languages spoken in Macedonia include Albanian, Turkish and Romani. Very little is known of the language spoken in the Macedonian region in Alexander’s time. That site, which now has disappeared from the net, shows a comparison of selected vocabulary between Macedonian Slavic, Greek, Sanskrit and Kalasha, from a public source inspired by Macedonians.

It is clear that words have been selected with the purpose of suggesting a close connection between Greek, Macedonian and Kalasha. But it shows the opposite: all the Kalasha words show the strongest similarities with the Sanskrit words, which is to be expected, as both Kalasha and Sanskrit belong to the Indic-Dardic-Iranian branch. The similarities between the others are either semantically distant (ants are indeed small animals, but the words are not cognates; smoke indeed goes up, but the phenomena of smoke and upwards movement are rather different), or the forms are quite distinct, or they go back to the same Indo-European root, and one could have written for instance Dutch *acht* “eight” as well as a word showing close similarities with Greek *oxto*. In short, Slavonic languages (as exemplified by Macedonian) are hardly more closely connected to Kalasha than the Germanic or Romance languages are.

3.6. Kalasha and Indo-Iranian languages

With 3,500 years of documented history for the languages of the South Asian subcontinent, and hundreds of languages spoken in Pakistan and (especially) India, the linguistic history of South Asia is reasonably well documented. Several works outlining the history and the development of the Indo-Aryan languages have appeared, such as Masica (1991) for structural changes and Turner (1962-1966) for the vocabulary. These studies leave no doubt that Kalasha is a Dardic language, a grouping close to the Indic languages in the Indo-Iranian branch, including Vedic Sanskrit.

4. Genetic studies on the Kalasha

The Kalasha have a culture and religion that is unique in the world, different from those of the surrounding populations. Even though Kalasha society has been subject to change, like all cultures, and many things have changed since Siiger’s fieldwork in the area in the 1940s, the preservation of a distinct religion, different views on the roles of men and women, distinctive clothing, etc. characterize the Kalasha as a distinct society.

How different are the Kalasha genetically from other groups in the world, and more specifically from the surrounding populations? Inter-marriage with outsiders does take place. Of special interest of course is the theoretical possibility of tracing a Southeastern European (say, Greek) genetic line back to the Kalasha. Even though Southeast European languages do not show a closer connection with Kalasha than Danish or Spanish, it could be possible in theory that some Himalayan populations descend from Southeast European populations. Genetic research could confirm local oral history about Greek ancestry. If the Greek soldiers stayed behind and intermingled with the Kalasha, perhaps this would be traceable in their DNA, but not in the language. Genetic and linguistic descent can be different, and putative Greek/Macedonian settlers could have shifted to the Kalasha language. There are several recent investigations of Kalasha DNA.

We take our point of departure in one study of Kalasha DNA, which was taken in a global context, with a focus on South Asian populations. Rosenberg (2003) color-coded the different genetic lineages. The details can be found in that study. The centrally located population groups appeared mostly red, but among them, two groups are strikingly different from the others, a yellow one in the middle, and a green one on the right. This red area, which contains all and only groups from South Asia, from the global sample. The red area is surrounded by Middle Eastern populations on the left (Druze, Palestinian; both Arabic speakers; predominantly blue colour) and Han on the right side (Sinitic language, pink colour). There are only two groups that are not predominantly red and blue between the pink ones and the blue ones. The group with a concentration of pink are the Hazara, a minority group in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. They speak an Iranian language, and are known to be of Mongolian descent, as confirmed by this study where Mongolians are also coloured pink. Furthermore, among these South Asian populations, the Kala-

sha – indicated by yellow – clearly stand out as well. Apparently the Kalasha differ strikingly in their genetic make-up from the other populations surveyed, at least for the genetic signals investigated in this study. The predominantly red area lists the following ethnic groups (with an indication of the genealogical affiliation of the languages spoken).

| | |
|-----------|---|
| (Druze) | Palestinian Arabic; Afro-Asiatic family; Middle East: blue |
| Baluchi | Western Iranian language; Indo-European family; Baluchistan, Southwest Pakistan, Southeast Iran |
| Brahui | Northern Dravidian language; Dravidian family; Pakistan |
| Makrani | Southern Balochi, Western Iranian language; Indo-European family; Baluchistan, Southwest Pakistan, Southeast Iran |
| Sindhi | Northwest Indic language, Indo-European family, Pakistan |
| Pathan | Eastern Iranian language; Indo-European family; Pakistan, Afghanistan |
| Burusho | Burushaski language; isolate; Northern Pakistan |
| Hazara | Eastern Farsi, Iranian language; Indo-European family; Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran (pink) |
| Uyghur | Eastern Turkic; Turkic family, Western China |
| Kalasha | Dardic language; Indo-European family; Northern Pakistan (yellow) |
| Parsi | Iranian language; Indo-European family; Afghanistan and Iran |
| Kashmiri | Dardic language; Indo-European family, North India |
| Panjabi | Indic language; Indo-European family; Pakistan (and India) |
| Hindi | Indic language; Indo-European family; India (and Pakistan) |
| Gujarati | Indic language; Indo-European family; Pakistan and India |
| Marathi | Indic language; Indo-European family; Pakistan and India |
| Kannada | Southern Dravidian language; Dravidian family; South India |
| Konkani | Indic language; Indo-European family; Pakistan and India |
| Malayalam | Southern Dravidian language; Dravidian family; Kerala, India |
| Tamil | Southern Dravidian language; Dravidian family; South India |
| Telugu | South-Central Dravidian language; Dravidian family; Andhra Pradesh, India |
| Oriya | Eastern Indic language; Indo-European family; Eastern India |
| Bengali | Eastern Indic language, Indo-European family; Bangladesh |
| Assamese | Indic language; Indo-European family; Northeast India |
| (Han) | Sinitic language; Sino-Tibetan language; China (pink) |

Figure 9. languages and language families of selected genetic groupings, with approximate main locations.

The locations of the populations can be found on Figure 10, with an indication of the language families and subfamilies. Kalasha is indicated with a yellow dot in Northern Pakistan, as an Indic language. Kalasha is the northernmost Indic language visible here, but keep in mind that most of the immediately surrounding languages are not indicated on this map, and that the surrounding languages belong to the same language family, and the same Dardic branch, as the Kalasha.

We can notice a very clear discrepancy here between genetic and linguistic facts with regard to Kalasha. Kalasha is a Dardic/Indic language, like many languages in the southern Himalaya. Even though the language is fairly closely related to languages like Hindi and Panjabi, the Kalasha are genetically very different from the other people surveyed. How can we explain this?

First we must remark that no immediately surrounding populations were surveyed. It is very well possible that the neighbours of the Kalasha are genetically close to them. Second, sometimes groups with significant endogamy may develop special genetic characteristics, due to a phenomenon called “drift” by geneticists. Individuals with special genetic characteristics who are particularly active and reproductive, may influence the genetic make-up of a small isolated group.

What do other studies on genetics show? Qamar et al (2002) concluded, with regard to the Pashtuns, Burusho (Burushaski) and Kalasha that there was no clear Greek male DNA among these populations. They wrote: “Overall, no support for a Greek origin of their Y chromosomes was found, but this conclusion does require the assumption that modern Greeks are representative of Alexander’s armies”. Mansoor et al (2004) likewise concluded that the Kalasha differed genetically from other Pakistani populations, and: “Higher Greek admixture estimates were obtained for the Pathans and the Burusho than for the Kalash”. They mention 6 % for the Kalasha, and between 25 and 37 % for the Pathans and Burusho (Mansoor et al 2004: 489). They conclude about the Kalasha: “Principal component and structure analysis demonstrate that a sizable amount of their genetic makeup is unique and different from the Greek and neighbouring northern Pakistani populations” (Mansoor et al 2004:490).

Quintana-Murci et al (2004) showed, like Rosenberg et al. (2006), a rather different genetic make-up of the Kalasha compared to the other Asian populations studied, based on DNA transmitted through the female line (mitochondrial DNA, or mtDNA). They write:

The complexity of the peopling of the region is well illustrated by the Kalash population from the Hindu Kush valleys, where western Eurasian mtDNAs reach fixation with no detectable East or South Asian lineages (...). Their outlying genetic position is seen in all analyses (...). Moreover, although this population is composed of western Eurasian lineages, the most prevalent (i.e., U4, (pre-HV)1, U2e, and J2) are rare or absent in the surrounding populations and usually characterize populations from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Caucasus.

In other words, the female line of the Kalasha seems to have come from the border area between Europe and Asia, hence from the west, not from the south.

The authors have this to say about a possible Greek connection of the Kalasha:

It has been suggested that this population descends from Greeks or from Slavic peoples, and they claim descent from a place called Tsyam, possibly in Syria (Robertson 1896; Decker 1992). The strong effects of drift and the small population size make genetic inference about the geographic origin of the Kalasha difficult. However, a western Eurasian origin for this population is likely, in view of their maternal lineages, which can ultimately be traced back to the Middle East.

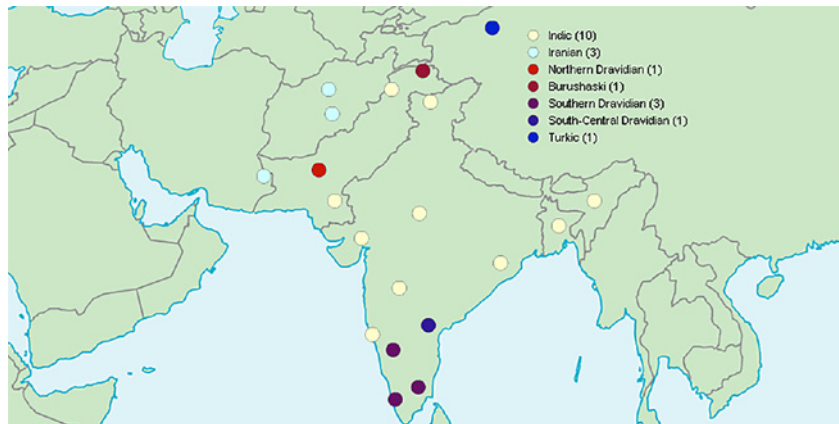


Figure 10. Map indicating the language affiliations of the ethnic groups in South Asia that were surveyed in the genetic study of world populations of Rosenberg et al. 2006. The map was generated by the authors with software developed for WALS. The actual location of the genetic population groups may not correspond with the precise location indicated by the map for languages spoken in wide areas.

Another recent study was specifically aimed at the claims of Greek ancestry among North Pakistani populations. Firasat et al (2007) investigated the Y chromosome (transmitted exclusively through the male line) of 77 modern Greeks and 875 Pakistani males, from the Pathan (Afghanistan), Burusho (Northern Pakistan) and Kalasha ethnicities. Generally, the study showed insignificant quantities of Greek DNA, except for the Pathans. Among a very small minority of Pathans some DNA could be detected that is associated mostly with the area of the Balkans covering Greece and Macedonia. To the extent that it was possible to date this, it was compatible with the presence of Alexander the Great's troops in the region in 327-323 B.C., or the presence of Greek slaves 150 years earlier. This result, however, was contested by Haber et al. 2012, on the basis of comparison of Afghanistan Pashtuns.

In short, the female side of the Kalasha differs significantly from other South Asian groups, and several genetic features point to more Western connections. The male line is also different at certain points from surrounding populations, but in any case not connected to Southeast Europeans.

5. Conclusions

Without Halfdan Siiger's work on the Kalasha, much of the linguistic work reported on in this chapter would never have taken place.

The Kalasha are genetically very distinct from the populations of the Subcontinent and Southern Asia in general. However, there is no information about their direct neighbours, i.e. the speakers of the Dardic languages or the inhabitants of Chitral. The Kalasha may be similar to them. The genetic distance of the Kalasha to other South Asian populations can be caused "recently" by isolation or "founder effects"; limited intermarriage with outsiders can lead to a genetic profile quite different from others. This may be the case with the Kalasha. Western Eurasian features in the mitochondrial DNA point to a genetic connection of Kalasha with Eastern European and Western Asian populations for the females. Along the male lines, no connection with Western Asian or Southeastern Europeans could be detected, thus excluding an origin with Greek-Macedonian soldiers of the Kalasha.

Kalasha is a fairly typical language of the region. It fits within the Dardic group. Its lexicon deviates significantly from other Chitral languages, but many of those languages also differ significantly from one another. Relative isolation in valleys may have led to the development that separated the languages from one another. No close links with languages spoken today in Greece or Macedonia could be detected.

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7. Dynamics of Cultural Survival of the Kalasha

Taj Khan Kalash and Jan Heegård

Halfdan Siiger’s early work on the Kalasha people (Siiger 1956, 1963) presents us with a culturally and religiously unique but also “backward”, economically poor and culturally threatened non-Islamic community. Siiger’s work also documents that the Kalasha were exposed to considerable pressure from the surrounding Muslim communities to convert to Islam. Although a number of publications document a vivid Kalasha culture (for example, from 2000 and onwards, Maggi 2001; Parkes 2001; A.S. Cacopardo 2006, 2008; Snoy 2008; Di Carlo 2007, 2009; Fentz 2011), there is no doubt that even today the specific Kalasha culture and religion is under strong pressure from the surrounding Muslim community. Many Kalasha have converted since Siiger’s field work in 1948 and since the 1970s the Muslim presence and influence in the Kalasha community has increased to such an extent that many scholars and members of the Kalasha community fear that the unique Kalasha culture and religion will disappear within few years.

In spite of these sinister prospects for the Kalasha culture and religion there are demographic and socio-cultural factors that point in the opposite direction and give an impression of a more self-conscious and culturally enstrengthened community. Among these factors is a population increase: today the Kalasha community numbers approximately 5000 people (cf. Bashir 2011), in contrast to the 2000-3000 mentioned by Siiger (1956), Morgenstierne (1973), Parkes (1983) and Decker (1991). Another important factor is an improved economy: whereas earlier it was usual that the Kalasha sold valuable fruit trees and fields to Muslim neighbours in order to obtain cash or as repayment of debt, they are today in some cases able to buy trees and fields back from the Muslims.

This chapter describes four different aspects of a modern Kalasha culture: School and education, establishment of a writing system, use of modern media,

and the involvement of NGOs in the Kalasha community. We see the activities within these domains as a sign that the Kalasha themselves, supported by people and organisations outside of the community, take initiatives that aim to strengthen the ethnic identity of the Kalasha. We do not aim to give an exhaustive analysis of the societal engagement regarding these issues. The purpose is merely to contribute to the complex picture of a traditional culture in transition.

We first give a short presentation of the central cultural and religious characteristics of the Kalasha people. This is followed by a description of the increased educational level among the Kalasha. Following this we describe the initiatives that have led to the establishment of a writing system for the Kalasha language. This is followed by a description of the use of modern media such as Facebook and web sites among the educated Kalasha youth. We round off by listing and describing some of the many NGO projects in the Kalasha community and we give an evaluation of their possible impact on the Kalasha culture.

The Kalasha people

The present Kalasha population numbers approximately 5000 people (Bashir 2011). The Kalasha live in hamlets in three V-shaped valleys, Rukmu, Mumoret and Biri¹⁵ in the southern part of Chitral District, in the Hindu Kush mountains in North-West Pakistan. The traditional Kalasha religion is polytheistic and characterized by, among other things, worshipping of gods at altars on the mountain sides, in village temples, or in houses. The sacrifice of goats, wine, bread and walnuts over an open fire is an important part of their worship.

Since the 1970s many Muslims from the neighbouring Kho tribe, the dominant tribe in Chitral, have settled in the three valleys. In addition, a large number of Kalasha have converted to Islam, and today Khos, Nuristanis and Kalasha who have converted to Islam (*shekhs*) form a majority in each of the three valleys.

In earlier times the Kalasha people occupied a large area of the southern part of Chitral District (Robertson 1896; Morgenstierne 1973; Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1991, 2001; Heegaard & Mørch 1997; Mørch 2002). The population was linguistically and perhaps also culturally heterogeneous (Heegaard & Mørch 1997). In

15 We use the Kalasha valley names *Rukmu*, *Mumoret*, *Biri* rather than the English denominations *Rumbur*, *Bumburet*, *Birir*.



Figure 1. Onjesht'a moc "purified man" purifying the altar mahandew before a sacrifice. Photo by Taj Khan.

1949, shortly after the independence of Pakistan, the Kalasha populations in the valleys Utsun and Jinjiret, the villages Suwir, Kalkatak and Gromel in the main Chitral Valley, as well as the villages Lawi, Uzurbekande and Birga converted to Islam (Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1991, 2001). Another wave of conversion took place in Utsun and Jinjiret around 1970 (Cacopardo & Cacopardo 1991). These waves of conversion had drastic linguistic consequences as the converts adopted the lingua franca of Chitral, Khowar, as their first language and transmitted it as the mothertongue to their children. The conversion waves also had drastic religious and cultural consequences as the vitality of the Kalasha community was damaged through the decrease in the number of Kalasha people and in the area that the Kalasha community covered.

The activities described in the following sections can be seen as initiatives against or reactions to this continuous cultural and linguistic threat to the Kalasha community.

Schools and education

At the time of Siiger's visit to the Kalasha valleys in 1947 all Kalasha were illiterate; to our knowledge, there are no reports of any Kalasha with a formal education of any kind. As the Pakistani educational system was established and developed during the 1960s and 1970s, a few Kalasha boys attended the public schools. Girls were not sent to school and most boys were still brought up to become shepherds. In the documentary film *Kalasha – Rites of spring* by the British anthropologist Peter Parkes, Saifullah Jan (from the village Balanguru, Rukmu Valley, and one of the first Kalasha to have received a school education), tells that attending Pakistani – and Muslim – primary schools in the 1970s was also an education in becoming a Muslim. Often the children were harassed by their Muslim teachers and school friends and the harassment would only stop if the Kalasha school-child converted to Islam, and some actually did.

Today the situation has changed significantly. It is now customary among the Kalasha to send both girls and boys to primary school (1st to 5th grade), and to let them continue in secondary schools (6th to 9th grade). An increasing number of Kalasha continue with high school in Chitral; some receive professional training in Chitral and Peshawar. While this may also apply to other tribes of Chitral, the Palula, the Dameli, the Kho, etc., to our knowledge the Kalasha are the only eth-

nic group in public schools in Pakistan allowed to restrict participation to their own group, and to teach their own culture and religion using their own language as the language of instruction.

The history behind this situation, which will be described below, includes a political deal and a great deal of enthusiasm and collaboration among the leading figures of the Kalasha community.

An audacious political deal and Greek financial support

With the daily harassments in the Muslim schools and the forced conversions to Islam, the situation became unbearable for the Kalasha. As a consequence, in 1993 the Kalasha elder Mr. Jinnah (from Brun, Mumoret) approached the minister of minorities of the National Assembly of Pakistan, Mr. Yazidiar Kekobad. Mr. Jinnah made a deal with him that Yazidiar Kekobad, himself a member of the Buddhist minority of Pakistan and occupying the seat in parliament for the religious minorities of Pakistan, should grant the Kalasha the rights to their own primary schools, if Mr. Jinnah would secure that in the elections to come all Kalasha votes would go to him as the non-Muslim minority leader.

The deal was settled, the Kalasha voted for Mr. Kekobad, and it was decided that the first Kalasha primary school would be established in Kraka in the Mumoret valley, with the educated teachers from the Rukmu valley, Engineer Khan (Batthet) and Anees Umar (Kalashagrom) as the first two Kalasha teachers to teach in Kalasha. Yet for unknown reasons, the funding intended for the school building never found its way to the Kalasha community. Another prominent Kalasha leader from Kraka, Abdul Khaleq, offered his old house to be used as a school building. The accommodation in Mumoret for the two Rukmu teachers was provided by the family of Taj Khan Kalash.

The primitive physical surroundings were to be improved significantly when in the late 1990s the Greek traveller and school teacher Athanassios Lerunis visited the Kalasha valleys and met with the Kalasha school teachers. Mr. Lerunis offered to raise funding in his own country for the construction of the first primary school building. Mr. Lerunis later founded an organization for the purpose of raising the level of education among the Kalasha and by the end of 2010, this organization had provided further funding for the construction of additional schools and other community buildings (see below).

Schools and educational level today

As a result of Mr. Lerounis’ enterprise and his close collaboration with the local communities by August 2012 there were nine Kalasha primary schools, a number of these are public schools, and others are funded partly or in whole by the Aga Khan Foundation¹⁶ or Greek NGOs. Table 1 gives a survey of Kalasha primary schools, their funding, approximate number of students and number of teachers.

| Valley | Village | Funding | Students | Teachers |
|---------|-------------|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Rukmu | Kalashagrom | Private (founded by the Aga Khan Foundation) | 45 Kalasha | 2 |
| | Balanguru | Public | 80 Kalasha | 2 |
| Mumoret | Kraka | Public, supported by a Greek NGO | 70 Kalasha | 4 |
| | Brun | Public, supported by a Greek NGO | 60 Kalasha | 5 |
| | Darazguru | Public | 40 Kalasha | 2 |
| | Anish | Public | 65 Kalasha | 2 |
| Biriu | Biyo | Private | 40 Kalasha | 2 |
| | Aspar | Public | 65 Kalasha and Muslim | 4 (one teacher paid by a Greek NGO) |
| | Grabatkui | Public | 150 Kalasha and Muslim | 3 |

Table 1. Kalasha primary schools, their funding and approximate number of students and teachers (2012).

In the Kalasha schools the children are taught specific Kalasha courses such as writing with the newly established Kalasha alphabet (see below) and they are taught Kalasha religion and culture besides the subjects of the national curriculum of the Pakistani educational system.

We do not know the exact number of Kalasha children who attend secondary school (6th-9th grade) but presumably students continue in secondary school in the valleys. These may be public schools or privately funded and they bring

¹⁶ The Aga Khan Foundation, www.akdn.org/AKF, is headed by the religious leader of the Ismae-lis, presently Shah Karim al-Hussayni, The Aga Khan IV.



Figure 2. Schoolgirls in front of the new, Greek-supported Kal’as’adur “Kalasha house”, in the village Brun, Mumoret. Photo by Taj Khan.

together children from all communities in the three valleys, Muslims as well as Kalasha. The secondary schools do not teach Kalasha-specific (nor, for example, Kho-specific) subjects, but Islamic studies are a part of the curriculum. In Rukmu there is one secondary school, in Mumoret there are two, and Biriu is home for one. According to our sources there are more than 50 Kalasha who have gone to secondary school and also finished high school, *Matric*, among these 18 girls.

Educational level among the Kalasha

Since 1995, when only the school teachers Engineer Khan (Batthet, Rukmu) and Anees Umar (Kalashagrom, Rukmu) had received a higher education, a relatively high number of Kalasha now have a university education or some other kind of specific training after highschool. As far as we are informed, 25 Kalasha hold a BA degree, and 15 hold an MA, from Pakistani universities. In addition, three Kalasha have moved to Greece to obtain degrees in universities there.

Many Kalasha with a high educational degree find jobs as teachers, as police officers or in the border police guarding the frontiers to Afghanistan, or in the tourist industry. A few Kalasha have more prestigious jobs. One Kalasha, Nabaig (Kraka, Mumoret) has an university degree in Law Studies (LLM) from a Peshawar university and now works as a lawyer in Chitral. Another Kalasha from Anish (Mumoret) has finished his medical studies and now works as a doctor in the Kalasha valleys. Among the male Kalasha with an MA, one works as a bureaucrat in the administration of Chitral District, another as unit manager in the Tourism Corporation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and another, Subhan (Kraka, Mumoret) as a credit officer for Alfalah bank in Chitral. Another, Imran Khan (Brun, Mumoret) has put his MA to use, becoming an environmentalist and working for strengthening the barter system in Mumoret.

The educational level among young Kalasha women is significant. Two Kalasha women have finished nursing schools and now work as nurses in the Kalasha valleys. Six women have received training as mid-wives. Three Kalasha women work as teachers, five in NGOs (see below), four are in the Pakistani police, and three in the border police. Of the 25 Kalasha with a BA ten young women have completed a BA in health studies, education, science or politics, and two women hold an MA, one in archaeology, the other in education studies. Both work within their fields, the archaeologist Sayed Gul as the director of the Kalasha Museum in Anish (Mumoret), see below, the other in an NGO that operates in Chitral Town, the regional centre of Chitral District.¹⁷

It is noticeable that a large number of the Kalasha men and women who have received higher education are from Kraka (Mumoret), the village where the first Kalasha school was established 20 years ago. This indicates that primary schooling in the children's mother tongue and on their own cultural premises – along with a strong support in the local population – is an important factor for a high educational level in a minority community. Many educated Kalasha work in the Kalasha valleys and as such their education can be said to benefit the community. At the same time, they are respected models for the children who attend primary and secondary school. In addition, and importantly, we see very few converts among the educated Kalasha, indicating that education strengthens what we may call the ethnic identity of being Kalasha.

¹⁷ A documentary film about the Kalasha NGO professional can be seen at www.filmfestivals.com/blog/vanessa_mcmahon/nymphs_of_the_hindu_kush_anneta_papathanasiou_speaks.

Establishment of a writing system for the Kalasha

The development of a writing system for a hitherto unwritten language is often seen as cultural step forward for the speakers of that language. It is also regarded as a necessary tool if the language, often a minority language, shall survive a future where a dominant language may take over essential functions in the speech community. This has also been the case for the Kalasha, and similar thoughts and concerns expressed by school teachers and other leading Kalasha fostered the process that eventually led to the establishment of a writing system for the Kalasha language.

The writing system that has been chosen for the Kalasha language came into being through collaboration between a Hungarian anthropologist, two linguists from Australia and the USA, Taj Khan Kalash (Kraka, Mumoret), and a number of prominent Kalasha. In the summer of 2000, Taj Khan Kalash met the Hungarian anthropologist Anna Haraszti in the Kalasha valleys. Anna Haraszti was documenting Kalasha oral culture, together with the Kalasha teacher Engineer Khan. The idea of developing a writing system for the Kalasha had been discussed before and Engineer Khan, who had already worked on his own proposal for a Roman-based script for the Kalasha (cf. Heegård 2002), presented his work for Haraszti. Taj Khan – at that time a graduate student at Peshawar University – had become interested in the development and promotion of literacy in the Kalasha language through his work as a language consultant for the linguists Ron Trail and Greg Cooper. Since 1982 these two linguists have worked with the Kalasha language and Greg Cooper had begun to develop a Persian-style alphabet and had created Urdu-based fonts for Kalasha (Cooper 2005). Initially that script was chosen because it facilitated literacy links with Urdu, the national language of Pakistan and the medium of education in the district. Roman script seemed at that time to connote imported foreign culture and was for that reason rejected as an alternative. Indeed, Trail and Cooper's language informants, some of whom were already partially educated in Urdu, expressed a clear preference for the Urdu-based script at that time. (For a more extensive report, see www.kalasha.org/pages/the-kalasha-alphabet-book/the-beginning.php).

During the summer of 2000 a number of meetings were arranged by Taj Khan, Engineer Khan, and Anna Haraszti for Kalasha teachers and elders where the issue of literacy was discussed (Cooper 2005:116). The meetings culminated in a conference held in Islamabad in 2000 for 21 Kalasha college students, representative elders from each valley and all Kalasha school teachers (Cooper 2005:117).

At the conference Cooper organized a workshop where he presented two possible writing systems for Kalasha, a Persian-style alphabet and a Roman-based alphabet. At the workshop, the advantages and disadvantages of the two writing systems were discussed, with Cooper as a linguistic consultant (cf. Cooper 2005: 117-121). Among the aspects discussed were socio-political factors such as script familiarity and learning curves, script as an art form, and script as an integrative or distinguishing value, where a Perso-Arabic script is considered integrative due to the Persian-based Urdu writing system in Pakistan, and a Roman script distinguishing. Also associations with other languages and pedagogical factors were discussed, as well as their respective suitability to the sound inventory of Kalasha (cf. Cooper 2005, esp. pp. 121-124 for details). After discussing and considering the advantages and disadvantages of the two script systems in relation to the linguistic and non-linguistic factors, the conference participants finally opted for the use of a Roman-based alphabet for the Kalasha language. The alphabet with the corresponding phonemes is shown in Table 2.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|--------------------|
| <i>a</i> | /a/ | <i>dh</i> | /d ^h / | <i>ĩ</i> | /ĩ/ | <i>õ</i> | /õ/ | <i>tʰ</i> | /t ^h / |
| <i>aʼ</i> | /a-/ | <i>dʰ</i> | /d ^h / | <i>ĩʼ</i> | /ĩ-/ | <i>õʼ</i> | /õ-/ | <i>ts</i> | /ts/ |
| <i>ã</i> | /ã/ | <i>dz</i> | /dz/ | <i>j</i> | /ɟz/ | <i>p</i> | /p/ | <i>tsh</i> | /ts ^h / |
| <i>ãʼ</i> | /ã-/ | <i>e</i> | /e/ | <i>jʼ</i> | /ɟz/ | <i>ph</i> | /p ^h / | <i>u</i> | /u/ |
| <i>b</i> | /b/ | <i>eʼ</i> | /e-/ | <i>jh</i> | /ɟ ^h / | <i>r</i> | /r/ | <i>uʼ</i> | /u-/ |
| <i>bh</i> | /b ^h / | <i>ẽ</i> | /ẽ/ | <i>l</i> | /l/ | <i>rʼ</i> | /r/ | <i>ũ</i> | /ũ/ |
| <i>c</i> | /tɕ/ | <i>ẽʼ</i> | /ẽ-/ | <i>lʼ</i> | /l-/ | <i>s</i> | /s/ | <i>ũʼ</i> | /ũ-/ |
| <i>cʼ</i> | /tɕ ^h / | <i>g</i> | /g/ | <i>m</i> | /m/ | <i>sʼ</i> | /s/ | <i>w</i> | /w/ |
| <i>ch</i> | /tɕ ^h / | <i>gh</i> | /g ^h / | <i>n</i> | /n/ | <i>sh</i> | /ɕ/ | <i>y</i> | /j/ |
| <i>cʰ</i> | /tɕ ^h / | <i>h</i> | /h/ | <i>ng</i> | /ŋ/ | <i>t</i> | /t/ | <i>z</i> | /z/ |
| <i>d</i> | /d/ | <i>i</i> | /i/ | <i>o</i> | /o/ | <i>tʼ</i> | /t/ | <i>zʼ</i> | /z/ |
| <i>dʼ</i> | /d/ | <i>iʼ</i> | /i-/ | <i>oʼ</i> | /o-/ | <i>th</i> | /t ^h / | <i>zh</i> | /z/ |

Table 2. Kalasha alphabet and phoneme inventory, letters in italics, phonemes between slashes.

The alphabet is strictly phonemical, meaning that there is one letter for each distinctive sound in the language, and that each distinctive sound is represented by one and the same letter.¹⁸ As the sound system of Kalasha has a large inventory of both vowels and consonants this gives a very large inventory of vowel and consonant letters. Since there are not enough letters in a Roman script for a language with as many distinctive sounds as Kalasha, diacritics are used with letters that represent specific sounds such as the retroflex and nasalized sounds.

While the creation and decision for an alphabet for the Kalasha language has been settled and agreed upon, it seems to be a more difficult task to develop a tradition of literacy, and perhaps more importantly to produce school books in the Kalasha language. In 2003 – with the help of Greg Cooper and associates – Kalasha schools were equipped with a letter-learning book, *Kalʼasʼa alʼibe* “Kalasha alphabet”, and later with *Kalʼasʼa mashkulgi* “Kalasha conversations”. But two school books are, of course, insufficient for the establishment of either a literacy culture or of creating confidence in the writing system. We believe, however, that there are opportunities for developing teaching materials through collaboration with other anthropologists and linguists who for decades have gathered texts and photo materials of different kinds (cf. text samples in Parkes 1983, 1990, Heegård Petersen 2006; Di Carlo 2009; and A. Cacopardo 2010).

One example of anthropological work that has come to use in the Kalasha schools is *Daily Life among the Kalasha. A Photo Book by Mytte Fentz and Torben Stroyer, with help from Engineer Khan* (Fentz & Stroyer 1995; cf. also Fentz, in press). The photo book, given to the Kalasha teachers in 1995, is a collection of 140 thematically arranged photographs that depicts situations from the daily life of the Kalasha. The photo book is meant to serve as a motivation for discussions and reflections about what it means to be a Kalasha.

If further integration of anthropological and linguistic work with the Kalasha education is to be successful, closer collaboration between Kalasha teachers and researchers is needed. The researchers, both linguists and anthropologists, should be willing to render their material accessible, and the Kalasha teachers should advise on and engage themselves actively in how the different sorts of material should be processed and modified for use at different levels in the Kalasha schools.

18 Exceptions are the aspirated consonants which are written as digraphs with “h” as the second element, and the palatal consonants /ɕ/ and /z/, which are written “sh” and “zh”. The letters “y” /j/ and “j” /ɟz/ and the letter combination “sh” for /ɕ/ may be seen as influence from English.

One source of such material may be found in archives in museums. In his pioneering study, Halfdan Siiger documented Kalasha mythology, ancestral oral history, ritual practice, genealogical songs, the local solar calendar and funeral rituals (cf. Siiger, unpublished, and Castenfeldt 2003). Along with this field data are more than 500 photographs and more than 200 ethnographic objects includ-



Figure 3. Two wooden funeral effigies, gandaw, erected to honour the deceased and protected by a metal fence in order to prevent them from being damaged or destroyed. Photo by Taj Khan.

ing ancestral effigies and items of cultural heritage significance. These materials, along with others collected by the anthropologists Mytte Fentz and Svend Castenfeldt in the 1990s, are located at Moesgaard Museum, in Aarhus (Denmark), and they represent an extensive collection of Kalasha artifacts and archived material. The materials could obviously be an excellent source for school books and other educational material with a historical perspective.¹⁹

Enterprises like this may prove to be sustainable solutions if the Kalasha are to become familiar with the Kalasha alphabet, to develop a written tradition for their language and to be able to document their (recent) history.

Use of new media among the Kalasha

The young Kalasha generation has embraced the new media. Facebook, Twitter and web sites are used for sharing information about personal as well as for societal matters. One would assume that this activity also would be used for promoting the Kalasha writing system. However, it seems that English and Urdu are just as much in use as Kalasha on the electronic social media.

Web sites come and go, and some web sites that continue to exist are not always kept up to date. We focus here on two web sites for or about the Kalasha that seem to be kept up to date regularly by individual Kalasha people. The web site www.kalashapeople.org (accessed August 26, 2012) is maintained by Taj Khan Kalash. It gives the visitor detailed information about the history of the Kalasha, the culture, the literacy project, the constitutional rights of the Kalasha, typical Kalasha products, and travel in the Kalasha area. Like the Facebook sites, it keeps the user up to date with news from the valleys, for example about untimely deaths, floods, religious festivals, marriages, divorces, etc. The web site also contains articles about political issues, such as “the Kalasha culture to figure as UNESCO heritage” and why the Pakistani National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) will not recognize “Kalasha” on the Pakistani national identity card. The web site primarily uses English; the Kalasha language seems to be restricted

¹⁹ Inquiries from within the Kalasha community indicate that the Kalasha elders, who are traditionally responsible for maintaining Kalasha knowledge and the transmission of Kalasha history and traditions, have shown great interest in the Kalasha archives at Moesgaard Museum and in their being made accessible, e.g., through the internet or through educational material.

to announcement about religious festivals and news about certain tragic events, such as devastating floods. Occasionally, also Urdu is used.

The Kalash People's Development Network (KPDN) is a network of Kalasha people and organizations that work on a series of cultural activities, such as the "culture conservation, relief and reconstruction, media projects, traditional sports, education and health". KPDN has its own web site, www.kpdn.org, where the different initiatives and projects are listed. The language used is English. KPDN also maintains The Kalasha Times, www.thekalashatimes.wordpress.com, also in English, a web site that brings news from the three valleys and articles about topics such as the possible inclusion of Kalasha culture in the UNESCO's World Heritage List and the "International Winter Sports Festival", a sports festival with competitions in the traditional winter sports in the Hindu Kush area.²⁰

The Kalasha youth is active on Facebook. Updates are typical Facebook updates, i.e. links to websites that the updater finds interesting, video clips on YouTube, humorous or semi-philosophical quotes ("I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become". – C.G. Jung), but also photos of other Kalasha or motifs from the Kalasha valleys are plentiful. Facebook has also become a medium for more serious news concerning the Kalasha society. These postings, posted on individual profiles and on a few community groups, such as *Kal'as'um* (*The Kalasha community/people*), *The Kalasha Times* and *Kalash People's Development Network* are often news from the valleys, such as information about the religious festivals, but also about dramatic and tragic events, or items of political importance. In 2012 there was a debate about what religion should be given in the Kalashas' Pakistani passports, where it is required that the religion of the passport holder be given (*Kalash People's Development Network*, June 3 2012 and later).²¹

Quite often updates are ethnic and religious statements, such as "Not because we are indigenous peoples, but because we are human beings with indigenous culture, language and our unique ways of being human, should our defense

and protection be a matter of highest priority concern for all people the world over who care about human rights" (www.facebook.com/KalashaPeople/info, accessed October 30, 2012). We also see notes and comments related to tragic events such as floods and untimely deaths, such as this lament of the death of a young woman in a flood: "*Homa baba Shahzadi homa histi paraw duniaani. Bo apsusas mon. Dunia hishkia ishnyahari ne hul'a, kas ta troal kas o krathal. Kundras Shahzadia rukas hatya khair kariu ori*". ("Our sister Shahzadi left us behind in the world. Very sad. The world is nothing, it makes some laugh, other weep. May Kundras bless the spirit of Shazadia"; Kalash People's Development Network, June 30, 2012). In particular, the news that "Nuristani militants" had killed a young shepherd and stolen 800 goats from the pastures of the inhabitants of Kraka (Mumoret), received a large number of both shocked and sympathetic comments from the Kalasha themselves and from friends of the Kalasha.

In spite of limited access to computers, the Kalasha youth seems to be very engaged in networking and sharing information using modern media. One may wonder why English is the most dominant language on Facebook and web sites. It would have been obvious to promote the Kalasha writing system in using these media. A reason may be that the Kalasha writing system has not yet settled among its potential users. It may also reflect that fact that the Kalasha communicate not only with and for themselves, but also for a large number of foreigners who have visited the valleys.

NGO's in the Kalasha valleys

The Kalasha not only stand out from the neighbouring tribes culturally, religiously and linguistically. The Kalasha valleys are also to an almost overwhelming extent the home and the goal of large-scale involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGO's). The NGO's may be Pakistani or from foreign countries, or individual Kalasha may themselves have established an NGO that receives funding from donors for a large variety of development projects. Table 3 lists a selection of those NGO's that have been active in the Kalasha valleys within the past ten years along with their area of work, to the extent that we have been able to gather information about that. Below the table follows a brief description of two of the most influential NGO's and an estimation of how the NGO involvement has had an impact on the Kalasha community.

20 Other web sites which promote the Kalasha are maintained by friends of the Kalasha around the world. The website www.kalasha.org, also www.kalasha.net, describes the two schoolbooks mentioned above. Another web site, www.site-shara.net/_kalasha/eflm-kalasha.html, is maintained by a couple of Japanese travellers and it gives a brief description of the Kalasha people and in particular offers information about Kalasha music and the religious festivals. (Readers can browse the Internet for private websites dedicated to or referring to the Kalasha.)

21 The Kalasha cannot state "Kalasha" as their religion in the Pakistani passports. They have to choose between, for example, "Atheist", "Other" or "Buddhist", "Hindu" or "Christian".

| NGO | Director | Area of work |
|---|---|---|
| Kalash Environment Protection Society (KEPS.) | Maureen Lines | Health care, tourist guide training and other community projects. |
| Kalash indigenous Serving Society (KISS) | Maureen Lines | Health care, tourist guide training and other community projects. |
| Kalash Culture Saving Society (KCSS) | Local Kalasha community organization | An important platform that discusses local politics, cultural threats; popular among the youth. |
| Kalash Health & Education Society (KHES) | Local Kalasha community organization | Provides scholarships to Kalash students and hostels for them in the cities. |
| Human Rights Monitoring Committee (HRMC) | Regional Organization; Two Kalasha woman, Sayed Gul and Zaina, are the representatives for the Kalasha Valleys. | |
| Ayun Village Development Program (AVDP) | Regional organization | Works for the Kalasha and other communities with funding from foreign countries. |
| Kalash People's Development Network (KPDN) | Local Kalasha community organization unregistered. | Works with cultural items exhibitions and selling of local products and handicrafts. |
| Help Preserve Kalash (HPK) | Internet organization, run by supporters of the Kalasha people | Provides information on the survival of and threats to Kalasha culture. |
| Greek Volunteers (GV) | Greek organization | Builds schools and community houses and provides funding for education in Kalasha valleys. |
| Kalash Indigneous Survival Program (KISP) | Headed by a Kalasha woman, Lakshan Bibi (Grom, Rukmu) | Construction work and health care. |
| Rural Community Development Programme (RCDP) | Chitral-based | Management of funding from USAID for the construction of a hydroelectric project for the Mumoret valley.* |

* The ambitious project is mentioned in this local web news journal www.chitraltoday.net/hydropower-project-for-kalash-valley/.

Table 3. Some of the NGO's active in the Kalasha valleys during the past ten years.

Kalash Environmental Protection Society (KEPS): KEPS is headed by a former Irish, now Pakistani citizen, Maureen Lines, known in Chitral District as Miss Maureen. Since 1986, Maureen Lines has founded around 50 projects in the Kalasha society. The projects involved initiatives ranging from the education of local Kalasha tourist guides, the construction of latrines and irrigation channels, and drinking water supply to medical projects and “conversation training”. Budgets range from 20,000 to 2,156,000 PRP, approximately 151 to 16,300 Euros. The web site www.hindukushconservation.com illustrates the large range of projects directed by KEPS.

Greek Volunteers: This Greek NGO supports schools, water tanks for pure drinkable water, water supply systems, and maternity homes, for the Kalasha as well as the Muslim populations. Greek Volunteers runs the web site www.greekvolunteers.gr. Of particular importance is the major and significant *Kalashadur* (“Kalasha House”, see below) in the village Brun in Mumoret. *Kalashadur* is a Kalasha cultural centre that houses a number of cultural and medical services, for example:

- A traditional Kalasha primary school.
- Seminar halls for training in traditional handicraft skills.
- A library with literature about the Kalasha and the Hindu Kush region.
- A study centre where Kalasha culture and traditions are documented.
- An ethnological museum which has received recognition from local and foreign authorities as well as having benefitted from positive reports in the local and international press.
- A Health Centre where Greek doctors and nurses from the organisation “Doctors of the World” have the opportunity to offer their services voluntarily and give free medical treatment to members of both the Kalasha and Muslim communities.

The impact on the Kalasha culture of the NGO's

The activities of the many NGO's have had a significant impact on the landscape, the villages and on daily life in the Kalasha valleys. Their influence on the Kalasha cultural heritage is evident, and their presence in the valleys is currently being discussed among the Kalasha. At the same time, many individual Kalasha willingly establish themselves as contractors to carry out the many different construction projects, such as building cement altars at worshipping places, roofed dancing grounds, village temples, irrigation channels, water pipes and latrines. Often individual Kalasha men and women compete to win the favour of the many well-meaning NGO's. This, of course, causes friction in the community. Some NGO's prefer to work with one particular contractor, even when the project is carried out in another valley than where the contractor is from. This may intensify tensions. The NGO involvement in the Kalasha community has been discussed

by the British anthropologist Peter Parkes (Parkes 2001). Parkes describes in detail how the involvement of NGO's has resulted in "unnecessary and undesirable" and "less successful" construction projects.

One possible side effect of the NGO involvement in the Kalasha valleys may be on the traditional self-organization practice in the community. For many generations it has been a common and bonding project for the clans in a village or a valley to collaborate on the construction of new bridges, irrigation channels, village temples (the *jeshtakhans*) etc. Traditionally individuals from different clans have participated and worked for free in such projects. Today Kalasha individuals only participate in the community projects for a salary.

In this way, NGO projects have become a source of income and possible occupation – at least until the house, the temple, the school, the bridge, or the irrigation channel is completed. The drawback of the presence of NGO's may be that inter-clan relations are loosened and in many cases broken.

The other side of the coin is that the money, or at least some of it, that has come to the society through the NGO projects has been channelled out into the society through wages to workers and suppliers. This has indeed contributed to an economically more developed community. Quite a few Kalasha, women as well as men, have invested in jeeps used as a sort of public transport service that moves people to and from the valleys, or they have invested in grocery shops, shops where handicrafts and embroidery are sold, or they have established hotels and guest houses for the tourists that visit the Kalasha valleys.



Figure 4. Kalasha girls' dress, piran, headgear, s'us'utr and kupas, necklaces, ma'ik, and other female possessions for sale for tourists. Photo by Taj Khan.

By 2012 this situation has changed dramatically. In 2009 the leading figure of the Greek involvement in the Kalasha valleys, the school teacher Athanassios Lerunis, was kidnapped by assumed Talibans from the Afghan region Nuristan (west of the Kalasha valleys), who demanded ransom and the release of Taliban prisoners in Pakistan. The incident created much fear among the Kalasha people but the Kalasha school teachers and school children conducted a protest march with banners and slogans in Chitral Town (documented at www.kalashapeople.org). Mr. Lerunis was released for a high ransom 10 months later, but the incident put a stop to Greek volunteers travelling to the Kalasha valleys and it has put a stop to the significant financial support from Greek citizens and NGO's. As another consequence of the kidnapping, the Pakistani government banned foreign NGO's from working in Pakistan. This has left many projects unfinished, and a number of Kalasha without work.

Concluding remarks

With this chapter we have given a picture of how a small minority in Pakistan interacts with some of the possibilities, the challenges and some of the problems that it currently faces. We have shown that there is a high conscience in the community regarding the need of education and also a vivid motivation for providing both boys and girls with an education or at least fundamental school competences.

The literacy project, which aims to develop the Kalasha language as a written language, seems to be going slow. For example, to our knowledge, there are no initiatives among the educated Kalasha to write down any of the rich oral traditions that are so plentiful in Kalasha culture. Nor do we see signs that the Kalasha school teachers are working together to develop more teaching material in Kalasha to be used in the Kalasha schools, nor do they approach the anthropologists and linguists who through decades have gathered cultural and linguistic material. And with only a few exceptions do scholars of Kalasha culture and language show interest in making their materials available for the Kalasha. If the Kalasha language should become a written language and if education in Kalasha culture and language should have a more significant effect, it is essential that the Kalasha themselves, and in particular the educated Kalasha, become engaged in such a project.

One question to be answered in the future is how the educated Kalasha will profile themselves in the traditional political hierarchy where village elders and clan leaders are the decision-makers. Through their education and their outgoing mentality, for example as reflected in the use of the modern media, the educated youth present themselves as people who are well-informed about political and economical matters not only in Pakistan but in the world. This sort of knowledge may very well become important in the politics in the Kalasha community in the future.

The large-scale NGO involvement in the Kalasha community is a challenge for the Kalasha people. The sudden cessation of many NGO activities may offer a pause for thought and give the Kalasha opportunity to reconsider how to interact with foreign interference in their daily life and political decision-making. In some respects the Kalasha have become dependent upon the foreign interference, which partly has taken over the joint societal activities (constructions of irrigation channels, village temples etc.) and to some extent undermined the traditional decision-making processes, partly has supported new institutions in the society (the culture house in Brun, the schools etc.). On the other hand, enterprenous members of the society have seen the predominantly western activities as opportunities for themselves to take further business initiatives. With these opposing tendencies there seems to be a need for the Kalasha to find a political or organizational solution that deals with the drawbacks that the NGO involvement in the community causes and at the same time converts the individual initiatives to the benefit for the community as a whole.

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8. Halfdan Siiger's Studies on the Lepcha People in the Sikkim Himalayas (1949-1950)

Heleen Plaisier

Halfdan Siiger (1911-1999) worked in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sikkim and India from 1947 to 1950 as a member of the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia. During the expedition, Siiger studied the culture and religion of the Kalasha, Lepcha, and Boro people and collected artefacts for the collection of the National Museum of Denmark. Siiger's fieldwork amongst the Lepchas of Sikkim and Kalimpong was carried out in 1949 and 1950 and resulted in an impressive number of scientific publications, which are listed in the bibliography below (Siiger 1955, 1956, 1957, 1967a, 1967b, 1971, 1975, 1976, 1978a, 1978b, 1981; Siiger and Jørgensen 1966; Siiger and Rischel 1967).

Siiger's extensive archives have been carefully organized by Svend Castenfeldt and were deposited with the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen and the Department of Anthropology and Ethnology of Aarhus University in Moesgård. Among Siiger's unpublished papers are his personal journals of his fieldwork in Sikkim, one written in English and another written in Danish. Siiger's field journals provide new insights into his research methods and his experiences in the field, and some excerpts of the journals were recently published in a paper describing Siiger's fieldwork with the Lepcha people (Plaisier 2007).

Siiger's most important work on the Lepchas is the extensive ethnological description of the Lepcha people which appeared in two volumes in 1967 (Siiger 1967a; Siiger and Rischel 1967). The first volume of this monograph carefully describes a wealth of Lepcha traditions and rituals and includes translations of important prayers, hymns, and legends. The second volume offers the original Lepcha versions of the ritual texts that were referred to in the first volume, as well as a short description and discussion of the phonology of the Lepcha language. The

Lepcha texts are given in transcription and are accompanied by *verbatim* translations and footnotes. Although Siiger announced a third volume of the monograph, in which the structure and function of the religion of the Lepchas would be discussed in detail (Siiger 1967a:235), this volume never appeared in print.

To the careful reader of Siiger's work, it is clear that the two published volumes of the monograph should be regarded as the fundamental descriptive groundwork that was intended to prepare the reader for an in-depth analysis and discussion of the Lepcha religion that would follow in Volume Three. In this sense, the third volume would complement the first two volumes, and it is unfortunate that the analytical volume never appeared, because now Siiger's interpretations of the described traditions have not been elucidated in print.

However, recent studies of the Siiger archives have made it clear that Siiger had largely finished the third volume in typescript. Several copies of the various chapters of Volume Three were discovered in the archives, some of which have handwritten notes that suggest Siiger had reached the stage of sending drafts of the chapters out to colleagues for comments, and in some cases later typescripts indicate that some of the comments had been incorporated into the text. Notes on the contents of the volume have also been found, as well as several versions of the introduction. The notes relating to Volume Three are currently being sorted and prepared for publication by the present author, and the remainder of this chapter hopes to point out the significance of this forthcoming publication.

In the third part of the monograph, Siiger ventures to outline the fundamental basis, the functional framework and the spiritual perspectives of the Lepcha religion. Before setting out to do his fieldwork in Sikkim and Kalimpong, Siiger had studied all available literature describing various aspects of Lepcha culture, such as the works by Campbell, Das, Gorer, Grünwedel, Hodgson, Mainwaring, Morris, Stocks, and Waddell listed in the bibliography (Siiger 1967a:17-22). In the manuscript notes to Volume Three, Siiger notes that most authors tend to study the Lepcha religion by comparison to other religions, but that he himself wishes to approach the study of Lepcha religion from a new angle. Siiger points out that the Lepchas themselves are generally not aware of the specific historical influences upon their religion and do not experience their religion as consisting of particular layers. Instead of placing the Lepcha religion in the context of other religions to which it may be either significantly similar or significantly different, he presents his description of the Lepcha religion from an "internal" point of view, in an attempt to clarify what the Lepcha religion would mean to

the Lepchas themselves. Siiger intended to initially concentrate on an analysis of the major religious manifestations and their individual elements, then on their possible parallels in neighbouring cultures, and finally on such problems as the origin, age and evolution of the religious traditions.

The necessity of this approach became clear to Siiger during his fieldwork, when he was subjected to scattered glimpses of the Lepcha religion. In his unpublished notes Siiger writes:

When living among a people one stays, so to speak, in the middle of the religious life, flourishing around one everywhere, as an invisible totality. But, of course, one does not encounter this totality, but different religious situations, e.g. a ceremony, a shrine, a myth, a prayer, etc., all of them being merely glimpses, scattered pieces or minor elements of the greater totality. However, the people themselves do not experience their religion as made up of so and so many elements, usually being unaware of the complex character of their religious totality. They are carried by a universal religious experience and feeling of an entity which manifests itself in a great number of individual, but interdependent elements. And in case we commence our study with a historical examination of the individual elements, we shall come to disentangle the religion into so and so many "roots" or "origins", and eventually lose any comprehension of the religion as a whole.

Currently, many old Lepcha traditions and religious ceremonies are at risk of falling into oblivion. Siiger was able to collect prayers and describe rituals which since his fieldwork have changed considerably or disappeared altogether. Moreover, the religious interpretation of many traditions and rituals that have survived to the present day is progressively more eroded. The unfortunate demise of Samdup Taso on the 29th of October 2011 provides a tragic example of the importance of Siiger's documentation and interpretation of the Lepcha traditions and beliefs. Samdup Taso was the last of the Kanchenjunga *bóngthings*, a direct line of religious experts that goes back to the earliest days of traditional Lepcha beliefs, who were the only specialists entitled to undertake the *kong chen* ritual. The *kong chen* ritual pays homage to Mount Kanchenjunga, the highest peak of Sikkim. Sadly, Samdup Taso was not able to appoint a successor, so the line of Kanchenjunga *bóngthings* has now ended and the *kong chen* ritual may never be practised again, unless a case can be made for Samdup's son or grandson to take up the succession.

Siiger is credited for being the only scholar who has rendered a precise description of the *kong chen* ritual (Wangchuk and Zulca 2007:40). Whereas some other scholars have mentioned the significance of this ritual (Foning 1987:46-47), Siiger's study is far more extensive. Siiger first described the *kong chen* ritual in a paper published in the 1950s (Siiger 1955), and the ritual is rendered in even more detail in the monograph (Siiger 1967a:190-201). In the monograph, we find a precise description of the ritual, illustrated by legends and anecdotes which were presented to Siiger during his fieldwork. This description also gives translations of the prayers and hymns recited during the ritual. The original text of these prayers and hymns is given in the original Lepcha in transcription, supplemented by footnotes (Siiger and Rischel 1967: 106-125).

Clearly, Siiger's published description of the *kong chen* ritual holds enormous value, all the more so because of the methodical description of all the steps involved and the rendition of the original prayers and hymns, both in the original Lepcha and in English translations. However, Siiger's discussion and analysis of this important ritual remain as yet unpublished. The unpublished typescript of Volume Three contains an interpretation of the *kong chen* ritual, which complements Siiger's previously published descriptions. Because of the immense value Siiger placed upon the *kong chen* tradition, it seems appropriate to include an unedited fragment of these notes here.

"The kongchen ceremony is the most elaborate ceremony among the Tingbung Lepchas and presumably the most extent and important one among the Lepchas. While all year round the Lepchas perform a number of minor functions for special purposes, this cult has an all-embracing character: it concerns the whole welfare of everybody, applies to the most significant figures of their mythology and to outstanding events of their history. Moreover, it exhibits a typical Lepcha attitude towards natural and supernatural powers and displays many of the fundamental traits of their religion. No wonder this cult towers like a peak in the ceremonial calendar of the Tingbung Lepchas, dominating the religious rhythm of the people. Before we enter into a detailed analysis of the ceremony, we shall just sum up the main elements and their contents.

The ceremony begins with an initial consecration of the sacrificial animal, an act immediately exposing the primary motif of the entire cult. The social aspect is indicated by the sacrificial animal being given by the Maharajah to the representatives of the people, headed by the priest of kong chen. The two

extremes of the society, the Maharajah and the common man, illustrate the entirety of the people in a symbolic way. The presence of the kong chen priest involves the religious background, and his prayer (Text No. 33) displays the concentrated purpose of the impending performances: the donation of the sacrificial animal to the great god for the benefit of the whole nation.

The ceremonious procession from the Palace grounds to the holy shrine is characterized by a feeling of happy solemnity; the party proceeds to the music of drums and bells, now and again expressing its emotions by ceremonious dancing steps. The processional hymn (Text No. 34), short and concentrated, affords a profound background to this undertaking. It recalls the first days of the world and deals with the great deeds of various creative *rûm* who made the globe a good and habitable place for human beings by their gracious gifts fundamentally important to civilised life: paddy rice, millet, maize, the cultivable soil, the institution of marriage, the thoughts of man and his ability of thinking. The very meaning of the processional hymn, drawing these primary creative *rûm* into the present holy sphere, must be looked for in these wide mythological aspects. The past and the present are, so to speak, united in this celebration.

From the moment the procession arrives at the hla thu shrine, the attention concentrates on the actual situation of the Lepcha society, and the ceremony turns from the mythological aspects to a more mundane view. But this immediate cultic situation encompasses much more than the present moment; it stretches backwards for hundreds of years, incorporating significant political events of Lepcha history. The fate of the people during the last centuries, probably the entire period covered by their memory, now becomes the centre of the celebration.

This is demonstrated by the night ceremony in the priest's house. Celebrating before his house altar, the priest requests (Text No. 35) kong chen and his wife to keep away from the Maharajah all influences caused by the evil powers, i.e. the mung. It is the first time during the whole ceremony that the mung are mentioned. These mung are of two types: nature mung and political powers. Among the latter occur the Bhutanese king, the Nepalese, and the Limbus, people with whom the Lepchas have had quarrels or wars during past centuries. Here the typical Lepcha point of view concerning the evil emerges: these powers are looked upon as governed by mung.

The next morning the celebration at the hla thu shrine arrives at the immediate problems of the people, and here it stays through the remaining part of the ceremony. The theme of the ritual (Text No. 36) is the present welfare of the Maharajah and the people, commencing with a prayer requesting kong chen to keep anything evil away from the Maharajah and to grant him a long life.

And then the emphatic words “In this place ...” (Text 36.5) appear, marking a ritual turning point. We are now in the centre of the Lepcha community, more precisely in Tingbung. The prayer (Text No. 36) shows that their first concern is the animals, and then the people. The request to kong chen and his wife is for health and a life in peace. It is repeatedly stressed that the people in return are giving presents to the gods. In this offering the point of view is obvious: giving to the gods, and receiving from the gods.

By the sacrifice of the yak a new element is introduced. The rituals (Texts Nos 37 and 38) illustrate the twofold religious aspects: the gods and the mung. The gods are benevolent powers whom man approaches through prayers and offerings; the mung are evil powers, constantly haunting man and attacking him to devour his flesh and blood. In order to satisfy the mung the Lepchas now give them the meat and the blood of the yak.

The remarkable fact that kong chen and his wife (Text No. 38) each get a piece of meat too, probably indicates the duplexity of their characters. The smearing of blood on each stone of the shrine and the prayer pertaining to this act are based upon the same ideas as those in the mung ritual mentioned above. The words “until the rain clears away next year” (Text 39.6) clearly indicate that the ceremony is not expected to have a permanent effect.

Among the Lepcha ceremonies this one is exceptional in many ways. It lasts five days, it concerns the welfare of the entire community from the Maharaja down to the common man, it comprises significant elements of the mythological world from the great mountain god and the minor creative gods to the mung, and it incorporates fateful historical events of the country. On the whole, it illustrates typical traits of the people’s attitude towards the supernatural world and demonstrates the material and religious needs of the society.”

[Quoted from Halfdan Siiger’s unpublished typescript of “The kong chen Ceremony”]

The fate of the kong chen ritual is a painful reminder of the precarious status of some Lepcha traditions. These notes on the kong chen ritual were included here as an example of the importance of Siiger’s unpublished notes, which provide unique information based on fieldwork in the 1950s into what are now seriously endangered religious traditions. The two volumes of Siiger’s Lepcha monograph that have already been published serve as treasuries containing a wealth of valuable information relating to the Lepcha religious tapestry. As was discussed elsewhere (Plaisier 2007), Siiger’s descriptive ethnographical approach also produced cleaner and more timeless descriptions of the Lepcha traditions than for example the work by Stocks (1925, 1926), Gorer (1938) and Morris (1938). For all these reasons, Siiger’s published materials hold great value to current research into Lepcha religious traditions. Siiger’s descriptions are regularly used in combination with the results of contemporary fieldwork into Lepcha religion, such as the studies by Jenny Bentley (2007, 2008, 2011), Charisma Lepcha (2000, 2007, 2011) and Davide Torri (2010). The publication of the typescript of the remaining unpublished volume should finally make Siiger’s well-informed analysis of these Lepcha traditions available, and complete Siiger’s *magnum opus* on the Lepchas.

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About the author

Dr. Heleen Plaisier has written a comprehensive reference grammar of Lepcha, the language spoken by the indigenous tribal people of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Kalimpong. She has also catalogued, digitised, and translated original Lepcha manuscripts. Her current research focuses on the legacy of linguistic, botanical and ethnological explorers in India and the Himalayas, especially Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, John and William Stölke, and Halfdan Siiger.

9. Fieldwork in Dzongu: In Siiger's Footsteps and Beyond

Charisma K. Lepcha and Davide Torri

Introduction

The Lepchas, or *mútuncí róngkup rumkup* as they call themselves, are the indigenous people who have been residing the valleys of Sikkim and Darjeeling hills for a long time. Until the creation of a Buddhist Kingdom by Tibetan immigrants during the seventeenth century, they enjoyed a condition of autonomy and self-government based on the authority of their chiefs, in relative isolation from the nearby centres of power in Tibet, from the petty kingdoms of the Himalayas and from the Indian plains where the British Empire was rapidly reaching a hegemonic position.

The creation of the kingdom of Sikkim in 1642 brought the area under the influence of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which soon became enmeshed with the Lepchas' indigenous religious practices and beliefs, i.e. *munism* or *bóngth-ingism*. The existence of polycentric religious systems of this kind was, and still is, very common in the Himalayas (see Mumford, 1989; Holmberg, 1992; Samuel 1993; Bentley, 2007). Despite their formal or informal affiliation to Buddhism, almost all Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups of the Himalayan cultural area possess a religious tradition emphasizing trance-like states and therefore usually identified as a form of "shamanism", or as a popular form of ancient *bön*. The presence of blood-sacrifice in shamanic practices, however, has been a continuing and unresolved issue in several areas: strongly opposed by Buddhism, animal sacrifice is a widespread practice in shamanic healing rituals, deemed necessary in order to pacify or appease the other-than-human entities who preside over life and death.

After the cession of the Darjeeling Hills to the British Raj and its incorporation into British India (a process commencing in 1835 and culminating in annexation in 1865), Christianity became part of the cultural and religious landscape of the area as well, deeply affecting the life of the Lepchas (see Torri, 2010).

As Gen. Mainwaring (1875:xii) wrote, the British presence in the Darjeeling Hills was the beginning of the end for the Lepchas. The conversion trend started in 1842, when

[...] the independent clergyman William Start brought more than twenty German missionaries to Darjeeling in order to start a Christian Mission post there. Although the initiative was not a lasting success, William Start and his colleague Karl Gottlieb Niebel did run a school for Lepcha children in Tukvár, near Darjeeling, for some time and translated parts of the Bible into the Lepcha language (Plaisier 2007:4).

Despite the ethnographic interest for their culture, mythology, language and scripts, the Lepchas of the Darjeeling hills were Christianized as traditional knowledge was ignored and forgotten. Having studied the Lepcha script and language, the missionaries translated the Gospels and other books of the bible into the Lepcha language in mid-1800s (Sprigg, 1983: 306).

One of the main reasons for the conversion to Christianity was the British establishment of schools and hospitals in the area. Villagers were drawn to town, where they could find employment. Conversion to Christianity was also a way to mark a closer proximity with the European ruling-elites, who seemed to have a better lifestyle that was coveted and imitated by the Lepchas. This change of status deriving from an association with the Western powers and their culture was also followed by some material gains which made it more attractive and luring for the Lepcha villagers (Campbell, 1869:145, 149, 154).

However, Lepcha ancestral faith has been revitalized in the wider framework of an ecological and political response especially since the coming of dam construction project in Dzongu, their sacred land. The indigenous religion, very deeply rooted in the environment, centred on the physical feature of the land (sacred mountains, lakes, etc.) became the vehicle and expression of ethnic identity. Due to its links to the sacred landscape, which are very relevant in Lepcha mythology and stories, the indigenous Lepcha religion became an important resource for all those opposing the dam. Lepcha shamans, due to their ritual role, became involved in the defence of that very environment on which the welfare

and the spiritual resources of the community ultimately lie (see Bentley 2008; Arora 2006).

Halfdan Siiger's contribution to Lepcha studies was surely one of the most relevant, especially for the analysis of their indigenous religions: while other authors focused mostly on social structure, folklore, Buddhism and language, Siiger was one of the first to collect and methodically compile a comprehensive and coherent approach to understanding the society. His work among the Lepchas produced one of the most solid ethnographies on the subject so far (Siiger 1967).

According to the 2001 census, the Lepcha population in Sikkim is 40,568 (Census of India 2001), to whom we should add the 34,731 living in West Bengal (Darjeeling District), 3,660 in Nepal (Nepal Census of 2001) and a few thousands more in Bhutan.

Mun and *bóngthíng*

Before addressing the central topics of this chapter, it could be useful to briefly outline the key-features and beliefs of the Lepcha indigenous religion, since it was one of Siiger's main interests, and he devoted to its analysis a huge part of his research. The traditional Lepcha religion is officiated by *mun* and *bóngthíng*, or priestesses and priests respectively who act as mediators between God, men and spirits. It is from their very titles that derive the name *munism* and *bóngthíngism* for the traditional Lepcha religion. This tradition is regarded by many Lepchas and scholars as well as the most authentic expression of Lepcha religion and it is based on the assumption that in some Lepcha lineages there are individuals – male and female – equipped with the power to interact with the supernatural world. These people, called *mun* and *bóngthíng*, are summoned to perform rituals in almost every phase of the life of the Lepchas.

The central religious roles in the Lepcha community are traditionally occupied by the *mun* and *bóngthíng*, who both function as religious specialists. The *bóngthíng* is traditionally a male shaman presiding at religious ceremonies and healing rituals. The *mun*, often but not necessarily a female shaman, is a healer who exorcises evil spirits, helps to heal illness and guides souls to their afterlife destinations (Plaisier 2007:4).

Recruitment to these shamanic positions is through hereditary lineage, and initiation is often marked by a crisis interpreted as an initiation by shamanic

ancestors or shamanic gods. After this first and somehow traumatic experience, training with an already established shaman is sought. During the training, technical knowledge about herbal medicines, prayers and rituals is imparted by the master to the disciple. Nevertheless, the real knowledge is thought to be imparted by shamanic ancestors through meditation or dreams, or naturally flowing from and through them during rituals involving trance and/or possession.

This religion is based on the assumptions of a strong bond between the Lepcha community and the environment in which they are living. This bond is expressed in terms of kinship with each clan associated with the various mountains of the Kanchenjunga range. According to traditional mythology, the Lepchas were believed to have been created by *Itbu Rum*, their creator god, from the pure and white snow of the mighty mountain Kanchenjunga. As sons and daughters of the mountains and the lakes of Sikkim, the Lepchas are embedded in a web of relations and exchange with a host of other-than-human persons with whom they share the environment and the cosmos.

Siiger in Tingvong

At the end of 1948, after his expedition in Chitral and before his travel to Assam, Halfdan Siiger stopped in Sikkim and was granted permission to visit the Jongu (Dzongu) area. As he himself states:

After some smaller excursions to Jongu I selected a locality called Tingbung in northern Jongu as the best place for my particular Lepcha studies, and at the beginning of April I left Gangtok for Tingbung (Siiger, 1956: 10-11)

The Lepchas were already known to anthropologists because of several ethnographic books and articles dealing with their culture (Campbell 1840; Hooker 1855; Mainwaring 1876; Mainwaring and Grunwedel 1898; Waddell 1894; Stocks 1927; Gorer 1938; Morris 1938; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1952). However, according to Siiger, that knowledge was far from exhaustive:

The knowledge of Lepcha rituals and prayers is very fragmentary, and as I had reason to suppose that such material might be at hand and that it might throw new light on the original Lepcha religion, I decided to devote my main interest to these studies (Siiger, 1956:36)

He spent more than two months in the village, before being forced by the monsoon to relocate to Singhik, where he spent seven more weeks. Afterwards, he moved back to Kalimpong to analyse and evaluate the findings of his fieldwork.

One of the first facts he noted down was the close association of the Lepchas with their environment. This association, according to him, was reflected in the “socio-religious structure of the society” (Siiger, 1956:38), which we can summarize as follows.

The social group is divided internally into several lineages called *pu tsho*, and each of them has its own religious specialist. *Bóngthing* and *mun* have a special power (*tsat*) which, after their deaths, is passed down to their grandchildren. Religious specialists are called on a number of occasions, but especially to perform ritual cleansing, annual ceremonies, healing rituals, exorcisms and delivering one’s soul after death. Siiger’s attention was also naturally drawn to the two categories of pure and impure (*a tshoong* and *a jen*), the dialectic processes of which encompass ritual and daily activities as well (Siiger, 1956:39-40).

Lepcha religion, as Siiger was inclined to think, is “closely connected with old Central Asian Shamanism” (Siiger, 1956:45). His theory was framed through a careful analysis of the *mun*’s functions and characteristics: vocation through a sudden and unpredictable ecstatic experience (the so-called shamanic illness that we usually find in the literature about Shamanism in Siberia and elsewhere); the use of a particular dress and paraphernalia; rituals involving trance and exorcisms; the concept of spiritual fights against human and other-than-human opponents, or even other *mun*; the concept of a spiritual power passed down from generation to generation (Siiger, 1956:45). Because of this, Siiger was “...inclined to suppose that the Lepcha religion represents a southern off-shoot of the pre-lamaist Central Asian Shamanism found in Siberia and Mongolia and once widespread in China, and which is the historical background of the Tibetan *Bön*” (Siiger, 1956:45-46).

We should briefly note here that since 1956 a scholarly debate has been raging around a very problematic set of critical terms in the field of religious studies: the concept of shamanism itself has been under close scrutiny and its usage has been widely challenged (Kehoe 2000; Znamenski 2007). Several contemporary scholars simply prefer to avoid it nowadays, finding it misleading and inaccurate, and preferring to employ indigenous local words or a less biased terminology. Another problematic term is the one referring to *Bön* religion, especially in relation to the concept of shamanism (see Bjerken 2004), since the word *Bön* seems

to be related to several diverse religious phenomena across time and space. As summarized by Samuel, the word may refer to at least five different concepts: 1) religious specialists (*bön* and *gshen*) of ancient times, according to Dunhuang manuscripts; 2) organized *Bön*; 3) spirit-mediums of various kinds, commonly found in Tibet and the Himalayan region; 4) Tamang and Hyolmo shamans, referred to as bombos; 5) practitioner of black magic according to earlier Buddhist literature, where the term *bön* was commonly used as a negative stereotype (Samuel, 2013:89).

The village of Tingvong

At this point, it could be useful to give a detailed description of Tingvong as it is today.

Tingvong is located in Upper Dzongu and is about 22 kilometres from the state capital of Gangtok. It is made up of cluster villages, which are also identified as wards for administrative purposes. In the area, there are five clusters/wards that comprise a total of 180 households. The five official wards are Tingvong, Lingko, Kusoong, Namprick, and Nung. The increase in population has led to the creation of a new cluster called Mongkong – southeast of Nung. Mongkong is a relatively new cluster and was created only 30 years ago. There is a road, which passes



Typical house in Tingvong



Road leading up to Tingvong

through these villages and connects Tingvong to Mangan and Gangtok, the capital main city of the Indian state of Sikkim. There are three schools in Tingvong, Namprick and Kusoong although the trend today is to send children to schools in Mangan or Gangtok. Most of the teachers in Tingvong are local Lepchas and only the headmaster and two other teachers are from outside Dzongu area.

Since Siiger's stay in the village about fifty years ago, a lot has changed both in the landscape and the worldview of the people. The following paragraphs will try to track and map at least some of the places described by Siiger and related changes.

I had my camp in the western part of the village of Tingbung, House No. 1 is situated almost in the middle of Tingbung village and belongs to *rig zing*, the *gya pan* or the local headman, I made this house my starting point for a survey tour of the whole district, using some of the local men as guides (Siiger, 1967:46).

Following Siiger's footsteps, I was fortunate to arrive in Tingvong and find lodging at the same place where Siiger had camped. While he had pitched a tent, I was fortunate to find a clean and luxurious place to live during my fieldwork in Dzongu. While the office of the headman had ceased to exist since the introduction of the *panchayat* system, the headman's house had been turned into a homestay promoting ecotourism and allowing tourists to rent a room, spend a night or more with the headman's family, eating their food and experiencing the things they do.

With the introduction of the *panchayat* system, where the *panchayat* is an elected head of the village, the headman's legacy still lived on as the office of the *panchayat* of Tingvong was the first-born son of the headman. Interestingly, the headman mentioned by Siiger had two wives at the time, and the current *panchayat chair* was the first son of his first wife, while the homestay was at the second wife's house. Due to his position as headman, the *panchayat* still holds most of the say in the village. He was also of the opinion that since their family used to have control over the affairs of the village, that control should not fall out of their family's hands.

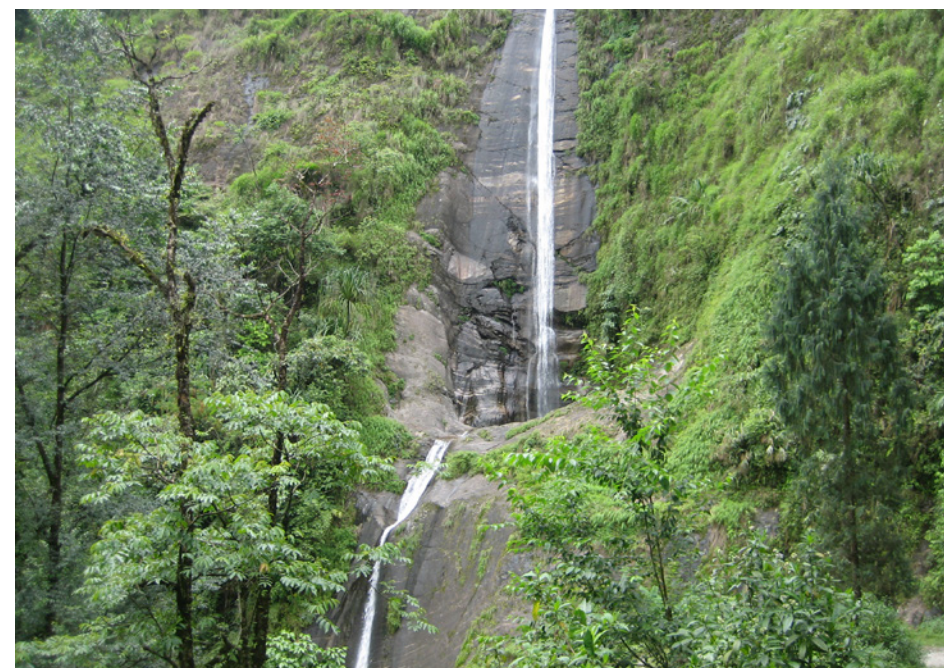
Our guides hurried from the spot, and we walked on until we reached an isolated patch of jungle called Manang. When we were about thirty feet from it, our Lepcha guides stopped dead, catching us by the arms they prevented us from going any nearer. They told us that this jungle is the home of a terrible *mung* who punished all who trespass on its property with deadly fever (Siiger, 1967:46).

Interestingly, the Manang jungle mentioned by Siiger still held the villages spell bound as they claim to hear sounds and noises around that area. There was a time in Tingvong when the men of the village used to go to war leaving the womenfolk behind. In the absence of the men, Tibetan robbers would come to the village, to rape the women and loot their jewellery. To put an end to the repeated attacks, the ladies thought of a plan to kill the robbers by getting them drunk and putting hot chilli in their eyes. Indeed the plan succeeded and the robbers were killed. Since there were no men in the village, they dragged the dead bodies to the jungle below Manang themselves, which became a haunted and feared spot.

Somewhat further northwards we came to a large rock named *kam li* or *kam li gen*. The family of the neighbouring house is in some way intimately connected with it, and they believe that all human beings originate from *kam li*;

others, however, believe that it is only the people of Tingbung who stem from this rock (Siiger, 1967:46).

Siiger was wrong about human beings originating from *kam li*, which is actually known as *kap li gen*, but he might have been right about the latter version. Legends speak of a time many years ago when a hunter named Kolokthing came travelling from the South and reached the Lingzya falls. He was thirsty after his wanderings and decided to refresh himself. He decided to take a bath and as he was drinking the water, he found a long strand of hair. Seeing that, he thought there might be people living in the area so he decided to trace the source of the waterfall. Upon reaching the origin, which is the Rongshyot ung-kyong, he saw a very beautiful girl taking a bath. He was taken aback by her beauty and grabbed her from behind. He vowed to marry her. But there was one condition: he had to meet her parents who were snakes. Lot of other men, he was told, had also come previously to ask for her hand in marriage but were unable to face her parents. Kolokthing was not afraid of this meeting and was ready to face her parents.



Lingzya Falls

When the day finally arrived, he met them and the snakes wrapped themselves around the groom's body. Kolokthing was a strong man and perhaps had some supernatural powers too, as he was able to withstand the grip. Having thus passed the test, he was able to marry the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. For the occasion he was asked to bring a pig, *ci* (Lepcha traditional homemade brew), a cockerel and other objects and offerings to be used in rites, which are still inscribed in the rocks of *Kap lingen*. These inscriptions are still found in the caves located behind the Tingvong Secondary School today. Their offspring are believed to be the clan of Araampuzet Ptso (interestingly, they do not take the male lineage because nobody knew where Kolokthing had come or originated from, and here the lineage is traced in the female line). This is the origin of the Araampuzet clan, the first settlers in the village of Tingvong, Dzongu.

These were some of the landmarks mentioned by Siiger regarding Tingvong that was revisited during the fieldwork in Tingvong in 2010.

Changes due to the spread of Buddhism in Tingvong

The spread of Buddhism, like other religions, is constituted by a prolonged process of contact and adaptation to local beliefs, practices, and rituals. Absorption, exchange, negotiation are just few of the dynamics of such a process entails and the mapping of such complex patterns is surely beyond the purpose of this paper. Nonetheless, it could be of some interest to highlight some details related to the spread of Buddhism in Dzongu, with some references to the changes it sparked in the very same area where Siiger was conducting his fieldwork.

For the longest time, Tholung monastery was the only monastery for many villages in Dzongu. It is recalled that many of the monks at Tholung were from Tingvong and while it was difficult for a Lepcha to reach the level of a head *lama*, Chodar Lama from Tingvong had managed that feat. He had traveled to Tibet to study Tibetan Buddhism and returned to occupy the coveted seat. But disagreements between the Lepcha and Bhutia *lamas* created a division and Chodar brought back some of the statues and texts from the Tholung monastery and built the Tingvong monastery.

Prior to his arrival, the monastery in Tingvong was made of bamboo and the first lama was Sambukmu Thikung who apparently had no family or relatives, and nobody knows where he came from. The second *lama* was Norden who was

*Tingvong
Monastery*



Monks at Tholung monastery

followed by Chodar *lama* who became the third *lama* of Tingvong monastery. With his extensive knowledge of the new religion, Chodar turned out to be a reformist bringing many changes with set rules of “do’s and don’ts” for the Lepcha villagers. He stopped the slaughtering of animals on the premises of the monastery. He also advocated *ahimsa* and discouraged the consumption of meat and alcohol. Meat meant game and Lepchas used to live off the land: the new order was a restriction on the hunting and fishing culture of the Lepchas. It meant that the fathers were unable to teach their sons how to hunt and fish in the way their fathers and grandfathers traditionally had done. Likewise, giving up alcohol was equally hard because *ci*, the local beer, is an integral part of Lepcha culture. It is used for all rites of passage, and is especially important during a Lepcha marriage ceremony.

Chodar *lama* also introduced the monastic *seda* school in Tingvong and encouraged Lepcha children to join the school. Today the school by the monastery is a government recognized institution called Govt. Rikzing Tarling Monastic Primary School where novice lamas are taught other subjects like math, English, environmental science besides religious studies. In Chodar’s time however, the children would only learn the religious texts of Tibetan Buddhism. In promoting a lamaistic form of education, Chodar also made it mandatory for each family to send their second son to the monastery to be a monk as in Bhutia families. While there are families who still send their second sons to become a monk, the practice was not enforced on those who did not wish to. Likewise, the young boys did not always prefer to become monks and had other aspirations, as there were stories about boys who had been sent to the monastery only to run away from the institution in order to come back home. There were only a few who really wanted to be *lamas*, while many others were simply accepting it due to family pressure.

Lamas educated at the Seda school in Tingvong have gone to different monasteries in Gangtok and Mysore today. But the older lamas also carry grievances regarding the inferior treatment they received from their monastic order. The usual complaint is that a Lepcha never becomes a Rinpoche despite having served in the monastery all his life. Today, the majority of the lamas in Sikkim are either Lepchas or Bhutanese. It is to be noted that the Tingvong *gombu* (monastery) is open only on certain occasions and remains locked during the rest of the year. It is actually the presence of the prayer flags that are seen fluttering throughout the year which gives an indication of the existence of Buddhism in the village.



Tibetan Inscriptions on the prayer flags

Prayer Flags in Tingvong

However, when one takes a closer look at the inscriptions on the flags, it turns out that they are written in a script foreign to the Lepchas: the prayers are written in Tibetan and a normal Lepcha villager would not necessarily be able to read through them. Even among the *lamas*, and especially among the novices, it is highly unlikely that they understand their own chants and prayers as the rituals are performed in the Tibetan language and not in Lepcha.

In the village of Lingko, there were prayer flags right outside the *bóngthíng*’s house. This could be seen as a blend of religions because he was a traditional ritual specialist who adorned his house with Buddhist prayer flags. But these instances were an accepted norm and nobody questioned the *bóngthíng*’s loyalty to the traditional religion.

This is not the only time when boundaries seem to blur and different religious traditions appear to overlap: *bóngthíng* and *lama* may cooperate as well, as is shown during weddings and funeral rituals.

At weddings, we can see the co-existence of traditional religion and Buddhism as both the *bóngthíng* and the *lama* would be present to officiate at the ceremony. The *bóngthíng* starts off by invoking the spirits of the clans that are being united and offers *ci* and rice to Mt. Kanchenjunga and to the rivers *Rongyoo* – *Ran-geet*. Then the couple would be called upon to drink *ci* from the same bowl. It is believed that the bride and groom finally become *nambaom* (a couple) only after drinking and sharing *ci* from the same cup during the *Sung Kyo Faat* – the exchange of marriage vows. Thereafter, the *lamas* chant their share of the prayers, which is not necessarily understood by the newlyweds or even by the *lamas* themselves because the chants are often simply memorized.

Likewise, the people of the village never miss the dates when new flags need to be replaced every year following an auspicious occasion or the anniversary of the death of a particular family member.

Death rites have changed quite considerably over the years. If the ancestors used to be buried according to an ancient Lepcha custom, today their descendants are cremated according to the Buddhist tradition, but a *bóngthíng* is initially required to separate the path of the dead from those of the living. A *mun* usually guides the soul back to where the person originated, but in Tingvong there was no *mun* and the lamas took over the funeral ceremony henceforth. So the presence of both a *bóngthíng* and a Buddhist *lama* is seen as an indispensable one at this time, since the souls of the dead need to be returned to their proper homes.

The burning of the dead is also seen as a prime reason why there has been a decrease in the number of traditional ritual specialists. It is believed that the spirit of a *bóngthíng* is hereditary in nature so if the father or the grandfather was a *bóngthíng*, then the son or grandson had higher chances of becoming one after the death of his father or grandfather. But when the funeral is conducted in the Buddhist tradition, their belief in reincarnation makes it difficult for the soul to be reborn as a *bóngthíng* himself. It is considered a possibility but it might take a longer time for the dead soul to reincarnate as a human being and a *bóngthíng* to be specific. Hence we see the practices of Buddhist death rituals, according to the Lepchas of Dzongu, have contributed to the dwindling number of traditional ritual specialists in the Lepcha community.

A lot has obviously changed since Siiger's stay in the area, and the Lepchas – like other communities – underwent different aspects of the manifold changes. Nonetheless, Dzongu and shamanic practices and beliefs still play a pivotal role in the community's life.

Recently, in fact, the ancestral faith played a relevant role as a means of mobilizing people, ecologically and politically, to oppose a dam construction project in the Lepchas' sacred land of Dzongu: *munism*, very deeply rooted in physical features of the land (i.e. sacred mountains, lakes, etc.) was taken as an intimate expression of identity, expressed as concern for the sacred environment on which the welfare of the entire Lepcha community ultimately depends.

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10. The Christian Missions to the Bodos and the Collections of Halfdan Siiger

Peter B. Andersen and Santosh K. Soren²²

During his work with the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia the theologian and ethnographer Halfdan Siiger had worked his way from Kabul to the Chitral Kafirs in Pakistan and further on to the Lepchas in Sikkim. By the late autumn of 1949, it had been two years of ethnographic work and collections starting in October 1947. So when it turned out that he could get another three months of work before he would be able to travel back to Denmark he decided to work among the Bodos of Assam for three months during the winter 1949-50. The reason he gave was that he had conducted all his collections among “hill-peoples” and wanted to study some peoples living in the low-lands.²³

When we look at his main publication *The Lepchas. Culture and Religion of a Himalayan People* (I-II, 1967, Vol. II with J. Richel) and his other numerous minor reports from these three years,²⁴ it is beyond doubt that he did excellent ethnographic work and it is for good reason that other scholars are working to publish his collections on the Chitral Kafirs and his unpublished analytical work on the religion of the Lepchas. Siiger’s collections are deposited at the Moesgaard Museum in

²² The authors were contacted by Svend Castenfeldt due to our earlier work on the Santals in order to prepare Siiger’s manuscript on the Bodos for the publication on which we are now working. In this work we have also received generous help from librarian Jesper Kurt Nielsen, The National Museum of Denmark, Professor Anil Boro, Guwhati University, Jørgen Nørgaard Pedersen, deputy general secretary Danmission, stud.mag. Kristine Tophøj, at the National Museum of Denmark, Director Anup K. Matilal, Indian Museum, Kolkata, Mrs. Dr. Mita Chakraborty, Deputy Keeper, Indian Museum, Kolkata and Dr. Ranjit Bhattacharya, former Director of Indian Anthropological Survey

²³ S. Castenfeldt in an unpublished manuscript on “Halfdan Siiger på Den 3. Danske Ekspedition til Centralasien 1947-50”, 2009.

²⁴ A bibliography will be found in *Halfdan Siiger og Religionshistorien i Århus*, 1981, pp. 4-8.

Aarhus and at the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. Likewise in the National Museum of Denmark is the manuscript Siiger prepared for publication on the Bodos in Assam. The title was *Boro: An Ethnographical Contribution*. It was one of the first ethnographic descriptions he finished after his return to a new position as museum keeper (Museumsinspektør af II grad) which was awaiting him in the National Museum of Denmark upon his return. From his correspondence one can understand that he had decided to turn his attention from the Bodos to the work on the book on the Lepchas sometime in 1953 (H. Siiger to Rev. Johs. Thoft Krogh, 12 December 1953). As he had to excuse himself to the missionary who had helped him during his fieldwork among the Bodos he was reluctant when admitting that he concentrated on the work on the Lepchas, and defended himself,

My work is moving apace. Although there is more on the Lepchas than the Boros, the reason that it is urgent to publish the Lepcha materials is that I have found something of particular interest which was hitherto unknown. But to state it plainly, the Boro Materials are almost written up, and if I could just get a couple of months in peace to work on it I could soon finish it for publication. The only obstacle is continuous time for work, but it will come for sure.

(H. Siiger to Rev. Johs. Thoft Krogh, 12 December 1953)

The overall idea of the Danish Expeditions to Central Asia was to fill in lacuna of materials from Western Asia through Central Asia in order to be able to write the ethnography of the peoples of the area before their original cultures were lost due to the expansion of the modern states. Siiger was especially attracted by the possibility of finding “unknown ways of life still flourishing in many of the remote, secluded mountain valleys” which “might retain many old traits of Indian and Central Asian influences”. (H. Siiger 1956:7). It was this search for religion and culture still untouched by the so-called world religions that gave the rationale for his selection of the non-Muslim “Kafirs” in Chitral and collections of non-Buddhist rituals among the Lepchas.

Such an interest – in discovering the culture of a former period than the one in which a people actually live – has given rise to strong opinions during the history of the collections of folklore in Europe. Where the early German collectors in the Romantic Movement assumed that there was a peasantry untouched by urban influences and that it was possible to find original national religious culture among the peasantry, later collectors pointed out that the simple fact that all the

peasants were Christians in itself documented outside influence (T. Tybjerg 2010). In later anthropology, the discussion of survivals from earlier cultural periods relate to the same kind of discussion. Here one of the most vicious attacks was formulated already during the First World War by B. Malinowski who stressed that it was impossible and irrelevant to write the history of a people on the basis of survivals. From the methodological point he further underlined that the mere existence of a survival meant that it had some function at present, and that proper anthropology should search to find that function instead of writing an imaginary history (B. Malinowski 1982 (1916) and more balanced in 1960). Later scholars have been more open to different approaches (J. Nicolaisen 1965, T. Tybjerg 2010), and we agree with those approaches to methodology which state that the aim of the research must determine the most appropriate methodological approach. So our interest will be in what Siiger’s methods led him to see as well as some of the blind spots it created. We will try to reach this objective from what we can gather of Siiger’s field collections among the Bodos from his manuscript and from other sources on the Bodos and their culture.²⁵ Here we will be most interested in sources on their religion as they may illuminate how tenable the picture one gets from Siiger’s manuscript is for the Bodo culture around 1950. As Siiger entered through contact with the Christian Nordic missionaries in the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches²⁶ we will aim our presentation in this chapter on the expansion of Christianity in Assam and the large village community where he did his field collections. Besides published sources, and the limits we naturally face. Although we have neither conducted new field work nor managed collections in India, Andersen has been able to make a one day visit to the village together with a team of specialists in Bodo folklore headed by professor Anil Boro from Guwahati University. During this visit to the village it was possible to meet and interview one of Siiger’s main informants and descendants of one of the others.

25 While Siiger was putting together his collections among the Lepchas, he kept a personal log which allows us to follow the collections from different people, weather conditions and other relevant issues, and he must have continued the log during his collections among the Bodos but it seems to have been lost as it is not in the National Museum of Denmark or at Moesgaard (personal communications, K. Tophøj and S. Castenfeldt).

26 The Indian mission which had independent societies dispatching groups in the Nordic countries, the USA and Scotland changed its name a couple of times over the years: Indian Home Mission to the Santals (IHM) 1869-1911, The Santal Mission to the Northern Churches 1911-1950, The Ebenezer Evangelical Lutheran Church 1950-1959 and the present name Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC) since 1959 (e.g., O. Hodne 1992).

The Bodos as depicted in Siiger's Boro: An ethnographical contribution

In his manuscript, Siiger presents the Bodos' Religion, legends and myths, folk-stories and traditions together with a chapter on periods of life and three autobiographies collected from some of his main informants. Besides this, the manuscript contains a catalogue of his own collections of material culture for the National Museum of Denmark and notes on the collections which had been added by one of the Christian missionaries, Rev. A. Kristiansen. In its total form, the manuscript offers a very dense presentation of the traditional culture of the Bodos as collected around 1950, but it is only indirectly through the biographies that the reader comes to understand that some of the Bodos had converted to Christianity and Siiger has downplayed the indications the significant influence of Vaisnavism and other forms of Hinduism among the Bodos. Vaisnavism had expanded in Assam since the 16th century and the selfdesignation for what could termed traditional Bodos seems to have been Hindus. Another Hinduic influence among the Bodos was facilitated through the Brahma Dharma which had been disseminated among them since 1906 when a Bodo returned from Calcutta (Kolkata) where he had been initiated in the Hindu reform movement Brahmo Samaj (S. Brahma 2011:65-75). This is evident in the presentations of some people that seem to have considered themselves as Hindus or Brahmos (*Bromos*) which was the designation of the persons initiated in the Brama Dharma. Siiger might have wished to add some of this to the book before publication, but the most reasonable assumption is that he would only have added rather short remarks on the scholarly literature on the Bodos fitting the pattern on his book on the Lepchas (Siiger 1967) and then write an analytical piece of work at a later time.

The religious calendar is described in detail and some of the relevant incantations for the rituals through the year are collected in original language, Boro which has been translated line by line in a separate chapter.²⁷ The high quality of these collections is beyond doubt.²⁸

27 Before his departure from Copenhagen, Siiger had studied Tibetan which may form a background for studying Lepcha and Boro. Tibetan is, however, so far removed from Boro that it is not understood by Bodos who are able to follow some Lepcha (personal communication A. Boro), so Siiger had some ability to communicate with the Bodos in their own language even if he was mainly dependent on his interpreters as Mr. Dinesh Boshumatari (H. Siiger 1956:57) and the local missionary and contacts in Denmark.

28 Siiger may also have downplayed the Hindu Vaisnava influence on rituals and myths because he considered it to be beyond his focus area, but it is highly contested, so we will not return to it in this chapter.

The social space of the large village where Siiger collected the materials is only indicated through notes on some of the informants but not as a place with a number of inhabitants claiming adhesion to Christianity along with other statistics on others purporting to represent the traditional Bodo-religion. Nor is it mentioned that the missionary of the church with whom Siiger stayed had divided its parishioners into two congregations, one of Bodos and one of another tribe, the Santals.

To understand Siiger's collections we will consider the presence of the Christian mission among the Bodos as well as the village where he collected his materials. To this end we shall outline the Christian missions to Assam, how the missions fought each other by proselytising among the Christians of other Churches and what this indicates for the collective identities of the Bodos. In the 19th century, the European and American missionaries worked on the assumption that the boundaries of the religious communities were more or less clear (W.C. Smith 1963, R. Jackson 1996, 2004, P.B. Andersen 2009) meaning that they failed to recognize and appreciate that the Bodos and other Indians were in fact freely associating with different groups, or even converting from one group to another (be it mission, church or religion).²⁹ So based on the evidence collected through Siiger's manuscript as well as historical data to the Christian mission to the Bodos we will emphasise that the religious communities were much more open than the missionaries assumed and that it gives a new understanding of Siiger's collections when one takes this additional fact into consideration.

The Christian mission in Assam

The Bodos (or Bodo-Kacharis, Boros or Boro-Kacharis) are one of the many groups of speakers of Tibeto-Burmese languages in the Himalayas, Assam and bordering parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh. According to the 1971 Census of India, the Bodos numbered 610,459 persons (B.N. Bordoloi et al. 1987), but identities are formed in different ways (B.G. Karlsson 2008) and if other related

29 At a later point, traditional Bodo religion came to be named "Bathuism" or more correctly "Bathou" (F. Barmahalia 2012) signifying a collective, but when Siiger was gathering information and materials, it was most probably called *mā dai hōgra* indicating that the individuals who kept it were "God givers" (i.e., "Givers of sacrifice to the gods", Autobiography of Taneswar in Siiger's manuscript).

tribal groups are included in the ethnic identification the figure would be significantly higher (F. Barmahalia 2012).

There seem to have been small pockets of Catholic Christians in Assam for many years, perhaps dating back to the time when the Catholic Capuchins were expelled from Tibet in 1745 (F.S. Downs 1992:90-91), but most of the Christian missions started around the time when Burma was forced to cede the areas of Assam to the East India Company in 1823 (R.C. Majumdar 1970a:34-37, & 1970b, 96 passim). Welch Presbyterians had proselytized among the Garos since 1819, and the Khasis since 1854. The American Baptist Mission was established in lower Assam during the 1830s. When the Catholic missionaries arrived in 1850 they were welcomed by the ecumenically minded British administration which supported missions at large from its seat in Guwahati. The Anglican (Church of England) chaplains in Assam mostly looked after the spiritual needs of the European members of their own denomination. They were appointed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). They were strongly critical of the Lutherans and the Baptists, so the Anglican chaplains worked to convert Indian Lutherans and Baptists to Anglicanism (F.S. Downs 1992:86-87).

The Bodos and the Indian Home Mission to the Santals

In some respects, the Christian missions were more interested in the hill tribes than in the Bodos who lived on the plains of Assam, but as the Missions all settled in the Assam Valley in order to carry out the management of their further missionary enterprise in the hills, many of them soon addressed the Bodos living on the plains in the western parts of Assam. Indian society was, however, not very individualised and in many cases the converts were only a few individuals who had close contact with the missionaries through work or business; some of them later became the first Bodo priests, catechists and “Bible women”, i.e. Christian women working to bring the Christian message to other women. In the reports sent home to the mission societies which had sent the missions it must have seemed that there had been very few converts to Christianity, but in fact these people were of the highest importance as they were the ones who came to convert the large numbers of Bodos in the next step of the expansion of Christianity. This was a development whereby Christianity

became an Indian religion known all over India, and disseminated by Indians (R.E. Frykenberg 2008).

As this chapter is directed towards Halfdan Siiger’s fieldwork on the Bodos, and as he became introduced to the Bodos through missionaries in The Santal Mission to the Northern Churches, founded as the Indian Home Mission to the Santals, the work of this mission in Assam is especially relevant to this chapter. As it is indicated in the name of the mission it was originally directed towards the Santal tribe living in the border areas of the present states Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. It started as a Baptist enterprise in the late 1860s, but later changed towards an Evangelical Lutheran position (J. Nyhagen 1990, O. Hodne 1966, 1992). When the Santals began to move to Darjeeling and Assam after a famine in 1873 the missionaries helped them in establishing themselves and after the Second Anglo-Burmese War the missionaries secured an area for the mission and the Christian Santals in the newly ceded areas in 1880.

At times, this colony was led by Santals as it was not possible to send a European missionary to cater for the spiritual needs of the Santals, and the mission to the Bodos started from the Santals. It was headed by a Santal named Siram who was one of the first Santals who had been baptised on Easter Day in 1869. He summoned the Santal families in the colony in 1887 and persuaded them to fund his mission to the Bodos (J. Rod 1947:14). With regard to the mission to the Bodos, one of the founding missionaries stated, “When the light begins to burn no European Missionary shall have the praise” (Børresen quoted by J. Rod 1947:14).³⁰ They funded the first mission to the Bodos in Rajadhabri. It was not before 1929 that a European missionary, Rev. A. Kristiansen, took residence in a new mission in Gaorang and later missions in Bongagaion and Patkijuli (Figs. 1 and 2) were added (H.E. Wisløff 1959:124-137). Each mission had a main church and around it there were 10, 25 or more congregations whose spiritual needs were met by elders or a catechist, and visited now and then by Bodo, Santal and European priests or missionaries.³¹

³⁰ J. Rod does not give any further reference for this quote.

³¹ This structure may be illustrated by the fact that there were 24 congregations with about 2,500 Christians around Bongagaion in 1956 (Anna and Haakon Halvorsrud in *The Ninetieth Annual Report*, 1957, pp. 93-94).

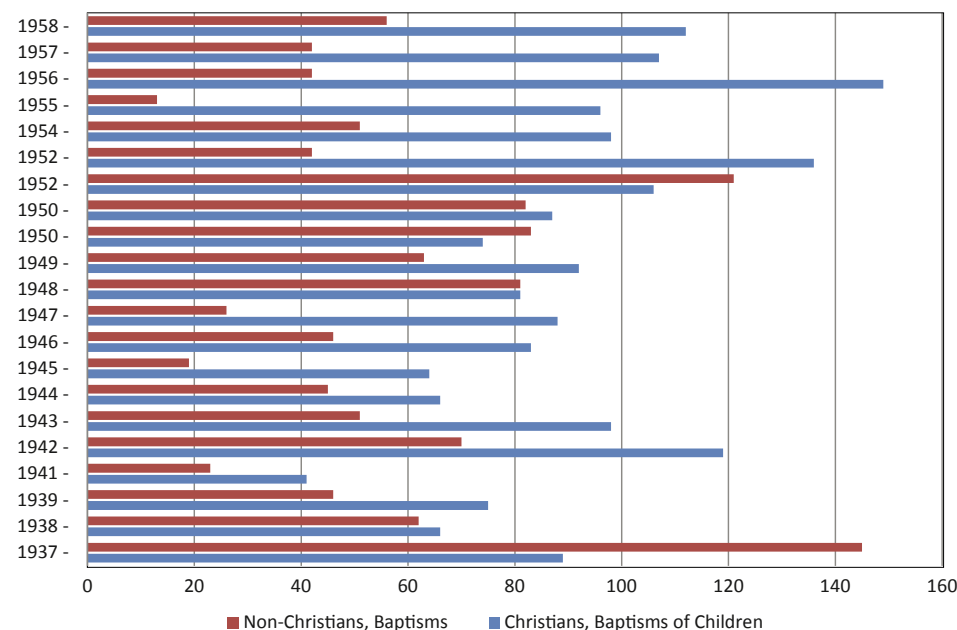


Fig. 1. Baptisms in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the area under Bongagaion Mission. (Source: Annual Report).

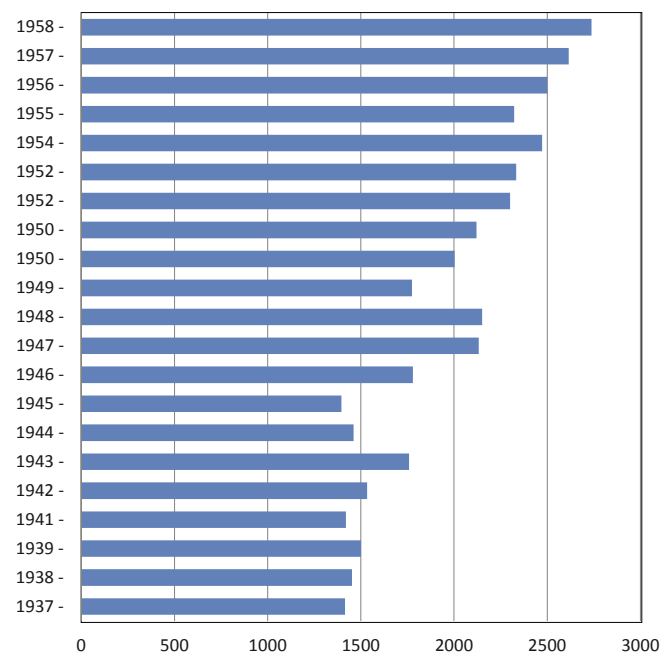


Fig. 2. Baptised members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the area under Bongagaion Mission. (Source: Annual Report).

Siiger's collections in Patkijuli

When Siiger planned his field collections among the Bodos he contacted Rev. A. Kristiansen in order to be allowed to stay at the mission as a “paying guest” (H. Siiger, Tingbung to A. Kristiansen, Bongagaion Mission, 15 June 1949), a proposition which was accepted by the mission, and in the end it was the missionaries of Bongagaion Rev. Johannes Thoft Krogh and his wife Magda who became Siiger's hosts when he was settled in Patkijuli. Here he moved into the mission compound (interview with Taneswar Sunday, 15 April 2012, Picture No. 1). Patkijuli is a large village on the border to Bhutan just at the foot of the Himalayas.³² At present, the village consists of about 800 inhabitants³³ and there are a number of Christian churches taking care of different congregations, among them the Bodo church presently under the NELC (Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church) where Siiger stayed. There are also a Santal, and a Bodo, Catholic Church as well as a Pentecostal and a Believers church. Santals had settled in Assam at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and thus were already present during 1949-1950 Siiger's visit. In those days, the believers and Pentecostals had not arrived but the Catholics must have been present as well.

As he stayed at the mission compound, Siiger broke one of Malinowski's rules which demanded that, “The anthropologist must relinquish the comfortable position in the long chair on the veranda of the missionary compound, Government station, or planter's bungalow” (B. Malinowski 1926:126). On the other hand, however, Siiger collected his materials in the original language and although he spent only about three months among the Bodos, his collections were part of long term fieldwork in order to collect ethnographic materials which would allow him to address the theoretical anthropological discussions in which he intended to engage. So instead of judging Siiger's collections in the light of one of Malinowski's rules it may be more relevant to take a look at the collections he made. From these it is evident that Siiger satisfied his own requirements with a small number

32 At present only the eastern part of the village has survived as the western part was destroyed by a flood. The village is named East Patkijuli; the post office carries the old name Patkijuli and the present district is named Baksa BTC. – In the spelling of the village as in case of the Bodo names and terms, there are great differences, and the spelling in this chapter does not follow a standardised version as Siiger's phonetics and spelling have not yet been brought on par with present practice.

33 Census of India 2001 reported that there were 823 inhabitants in Patkijuli (then in Nalbari District and the Sub-District Tamulpur Sub-Dt. village code 00718000), (Government of India 2001).



Siiger's informant Taneswar in his home, 15 April 2012. (Photo: Peter B. Andersen).

of main informants and perhaps interpreters who were also gatekeepers should one use a more modern term (L.M. Campbell et al. 2006).

This is evident from Siiger's manuscript. When working on the manuscript, he only changed some wordings in his field notes, to improve the flow of the descriptions, but still keeping a reference to the site and day of collection as well as to the informant. The main informants on religion, folklore and ritual incantations were Adiram, Lokiram, Borgagaon (or Børgavari), Taneswar, Pasaru Boshumtari (the latter's contribution was mostly limited to his autobiography) and – last but not least – Maguram Moeahari (Mosumotari). He had been ordained as a priest in 1945 and lived in Patkijuli since. In 1959 he had even become a leader of the Bodo church council.³⁴

When we visited Parkijuli, the dependents of Maguram told us that they thought only one of Siiger's informants might have been a non-Christian all his

³⁴ The identification with Maguram Moeahari (Mosumotrai) as the local Bodo priest is evident when reading H.E. Wisløff 1959:134 ff. even Wisløff spells him Maguram Mosahary.



The descendants of Maguram Moeahari (Mosahary) together with professor Anil Boro in front of the present church of Patkijuli 15. April 2012.

Persons: a. Mishaël Bosomutary, Biswajit Brahma, Sunjriash Nazari, Buddhi Mosahary, b. Anil Boro, Soisingra Mosahary, Dawhanangra Mosahary, Ruben Bosumutary, Mari Nardini and c. Ronjay Mosahary, John Bosomutary, Sansuma Bosomutary, Donal Narzary, Subungsa Bosomutary

life. This was Lokiram Borgagaoan; the rest of them were Christians at the time of Siiger's visit or became Christians at a later point of time. All of them were successful in later life as they managed to settle as agriculturalists, teachers, or headmen. Some of the descendants of Mosumutary became leaders in the Christian church and all the males spoke brilliant English.³⁵

The biographies of some of the informants include their outreach beyond the village and in the Christian church. Adiram had moved widely around in Assam and seems to have spoken several languages, among them Nepali. He had become a schoolteacher by being employed by some villagers as a private teacher who was later elevated in the government system and employed by the Christian mission where A. Kristiansen had appointed him. In his introduction of Adiram as one of his informants Siiger stressed that Adiram who had converted to Christianity when he was about 54 years old knew the non-Christian Bodo ceremonies from his childhood when he had attended them, and that that, "He (Adiram) asserts that the non-Christian Bodo still perform the following ceremonies".

Taneswar heard about Christianity when he was about twelve years old and "some Boro-preachers were preaching" in his village, and as an adult, after lengthy reflection, he converted to Christianity after some religious experiments in the proper sense of the term experiment. In one case, he had a friend of his fake stomach disorders to see what god the *ādza* (the Boro term for the *ojha* or medicine man) would find had caused it by consulting his cowries (Taneswar's autobiography in Siiger's manuscript).

It is evident that Siiger had entered the society through the mission as most of his informants were affiliated with the mission. It is also evident that relying on a main informant who has been outside his culture for years to report on it does not live up to the standards of ethnographic methodology of later days (J.P. Spradley 1979). On the other hand, the extremely dense descriptions of the rituals and the collection of the incantations in Boro seems persuasive. Here we face the level of a culture which may be learned by heart or may be so well known to the informants that one can trust them (e.g., J. Vansina 1985). The important part is whether Siiger managed to identify core informants with a high level of knowledge and it seems that he was very successful in this regard.

Another aspect of the quality of the informants is the question of whether the distance between the various religious cultures was as great as occasionally as-

sumed, and indeed particularly by the European missionaries. Firstly we shall look at the changes of membership between the different churches, and secondly we shall look at Taneswar's retrospective considerations regarding his conversion to Christianity.

"Sheep stealing" and open religious identities

As mentioned, the different protestant missions to Assam were strongly opposed to each other and in many instances their mission were as much directed at the congregations of the other Christian confessions as towards the non-Christians. As early as 1848, one of the Baptist missionaries to Assam reported that the Anglican missionaries belonging to Anglo-Catholicism had converted several of the prospective converts to the American Baptists by telling them that the Baptists "have no authority to preach and baptize" (Nathan Brown 1848, quoted from F.S. Downs 1992:87). Later on, it is evident that there were a number of conversions between the different churches, but the Baptists and the Lutherans divided some areas among themselves in order to be able to take care of the Christians in their respective areas.³⁶ Regarding the Lutheran Mission to the Bodos carried out through The Santal Mission to the Northern Churches, the European missionaries mostly complained that it was the Catholics who made conversions from their flock. In this regard, the church leaders of the various missions explained the offers of the other churches as religiously poor and of a lower religious quality than the religion of their own confession. Social control and specific relations within the different communities were often stressed by the clergy who lost parts of their flock. This was the case when the Bodo Bahadur who had been ordained as a priest took all the local parishioners except one family with him over to the Catholics in 1933. The reason was that he had fallen into "sin" as it was explained (J. Rod 1947:25). In this regard, he acted as he had done earlier as he had been sacked once before for an "unclean livelihood" (J. Rod 1947:20). There is evidence that individuals have moved between the Catholics and the Evangelical Lutherans. In some cases, the Evangelical Lutherans saw a difference in the fact that the Catholics were more

³⁵ For the informants in the collective interview Sunday, 15 April 2012 see Picture No. 2.

³⁶ The agreement was between the mission of The Free Church of Scotland (skotske Frikirkes Mission), the Lutheran Mission and the American and Australian Baptist missions (year of the agreement is not reported), (J. Rod 1947:23-24).

permissive with regard to alcohol consumption which the Lutherans had forbidden among their flock (J. Rod 1947:48); the Lutherans were generally critical of the permissiveness of the Catholics. In the case of Bahadur, the Lutheran historian of the church among the Bodos, rationalises that Bahadur had once again fallen into sin, and ironically reported that it seemed to be an issue “which the Catholic missionaries were able to sort out in a hurry” (J. Rod 1947:25).

From a social point of view, it is interesting that the individual Bodo Christians did not seem to perceive the same fundamental differences between the different Christian creeds as the European and American church personal did. The Bodos seemingly moved rather untroubled between the different creeds with only little concern for their own salvation. In the case of Bahadur, it also becomes evident that large parts of the congregation followed the local Bodo priest rather than bothering about the European missionaries at a higher level of the church.

In Taneswar’s autobiography, it is evident that his conversion to Christianity only touched some aspects of his world view while he retained other non-Christian aspects internalised during his upbringing. For example, he took for granted the non-Christian explanation of earthquakes: earthquakes are created by the tortoise. “Whenever the tortoise moves, the whole earth will shake”. That is the tortoise up which the world rests in accordance with Hindu Vaisnava mythology. And when it comes to Taneswar’s classification of religions he talks about “the followers of the old Boro-religion” (Siiger’s comment) as *mā dai hō gras* “God givers” (i.e., “Givers of sacrifice to the gods”) the term used for them by the Christians and the Bromos (see p. 170), but in fact Siiger states that those followers of the old Bodo-religion call themselves Hindus (Siiger’s comment in the Autobiography of Taneswar). It is evident that personal and ascribed identities are in constant flux, and with this in mind, we see no trouble in accepting Siiger’s informants for the old Bodo-religion as such, as their own identities and their own religion are so much richer than the presentation of historical facts they had to follow when Siiger worked with them.

Viewing his own conversion to Christianity, Taneswar considered the Christians and the Bromos to be similar. He seems to have had the same level of respect for the Bromos and the Christians but he knew that now and then the Bromos drink wine and sneak out in the forest to sacrifice, so, “they are not true Bromos but still attached to the old Bodo-religion” (Autobiography of Taneswar).

Compared to the European Missionaries’ concept of sin and the assumption that the heathens sacrificed to evil spirits (e.g., H.E. Wisløff 1959), it is evident

that Taneswar has not incorporated this in his religious life. To him miracles of the different religions were all the effect of the power of their gods, when he could check out that the *ādza* in the traditional Bodo-religion faked his rituals he went for other religions, and in the end he became a Christian. He could also tell about the miracles the local Lutheran priest Maguram had accomplished, and how Maguram had lived in celibacy for a period of his life (Autobiography of Taneswar). Taneswar did not consider why Maguram had lived in celibacy, but as celibacy is foreign to the Lutherans, where Maguram belonged, the conceptual reference is to the Hindu institution of brahmacharya, not to the Catholic intuition of a celibate pastor or monk.

Conclusion

When approaching Siiger’s collections on the Bodos we are convinced that they depict what he termed as traditional Bodo-Religion in a convincing way even if most of his collections were carried out among Christian Bodos to whom the Christian mission with which he had stayed introduced him. He succeeded in finding “unknown ways of life still flourishing” on the plains in Assam in front of the Himalayas as well as “in ... remote, secluded mountain valleys”. When it comes to understand his manuscript as a source to the Bodos in 1949-50 we face the problem that one has to disentangle the presentation to understand that culture and religion of the Bodos in Patkijuli village were very different from what he intended to present in *Boro: An Ethnographic Contribution*. Later anthropologists have talked about the ethnographic present as the temporal present of the field collections, but Siiger’s presence was not contemporary with the object of his collections, but from a culture which was gone before he entered the Bodo village which means that its inhabitants were beyond his interest whether they were Christians, Hindus or Bromos. One may say that his object blinded him to the present. His work is still highly relevant for the understanding of that bygone culture and it is able to help us to understand a level of Bodo culture and religion of which we have only limited access through ethnographic collections, and whether his work was present 1949-50 or some undefined time sometime before that it offers us high quality collections on that culture. A fact which is evident when comparing the classical investigations on Bodo culture as they were published around 1900. In most of its chapters Siiger’s manuscript is more compre-

hensive than S. Endle's (1911) classical study of the Bodos and when one goes down in the content Siiger offers much better and more precise descriptions of the rituals and habits of the Bodos.

One of the reasons that this is possible is due to the fact that Siiger's informants were able to live in their present Christian religion as well as in a bygone Bodo Religion. This fact stresses that the borders between one and the other were not as rigid as Siiger and the European missionaries assumed.

When it comes to the utilisation of Siiger's presentation of the religion and culture of the Bodos, one has to be aware of his qualities as well as his blind spots. If the wish is to understand the culture of the Bodos in the first part of the 20th century, his work is to be recommended with the caution, that there are more to the religion of the Bodos than what Siiger offers of. These forms of religion and culture are, however, those representations which laid the foundation for the reforms of Bodo religion, whether it was by the Brahma Dharma or later movements, and they were behind the creation of the written Bodo literature in Boro language of today. For this reason it is possible to find other sources for them. For the study of traditional forms of Bodo religion Siiger's work offers a large and high quality addition to the rather small amount of sources already present. When we work with his collections we will have to consider the fluid identities, as we will always have to, and the concept of traditional religion, may have to become another fluid identity just imposed from outsiders.

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11. A Mongol Shaman Curse

Rolf Gilberg

In Northern Inner Mongolia in the mid-1930s, the Danish explorer and Mongol-ist, Henning Haslund-Christensen (1896-1948) discovered an abandoned shaman's tent containing a shaman costume together with shaman tools and outfits. Among his papers, Haslund left an account (in Danish) of how he acquired the tent (Haslund 1944).

At that time, the shaman's tent and outfits had not been in use for half a century. Before that, it had been used, successively, by at least three Mongol shamans. When Haslund came across the tent and contents, they were in the care of a local Mongol who was not himself a shaman, but rather a distant relative of the last shaman who had used the objects. He had been given the task of keeping an eye on the shaman's objects, and he had hidden them in a distant valley. His wife was a Buddhist and his small family had suffered greatly, losing both cattle and children to illness and death. The caretaker was happy to get rid of the shaman's things, for which Haslund paid him. The caretaker believed his misfortune was the result of a curse placed on the shaman's objects. This was allegedly because there was no shaman present to control the powerful spirit world in and around the tent and its contents; the spirits had therefore been given a free rein.

When moving the shaman's objects back to his headquarters at the "White Temple" in central Inner Mongolia, Haslund took only a few trusty Mongol helpers with him so as not to alarm any local Mongols along the route as nobody should know that anyone was moving the shamans' objects. However, on the return journey a camel got very sick. The Mongol helpers were convinced that it was caused by the shaman's curse, so they abandoned Haslund who had to make the rest of the trip alone.

At the headquarters, Haslund kept all the shaman's objects on top of a flat house roof so that no one could see them. There he could take photos and study the objects in peace and quiet. Haslund planned to write a book on the Mongol shamans, of whom he had met several. During his time in Mongolia (1923-1939)



Henning Haslund-Christensen on a camel in front of the Danish expedition headquarters, The White Temple, in Inner Mongolia, 1939.

he had been present on several occasions when Mongol shamans performed. Haslund had learned to speak Mongolian, so he could talk directly with the shamans. In 1936 he had obtained two complete Mongol shaman costumes belonging to the shamans Basaman and Dölgöre, who both died in their early 60s. In both cases Haslund happened to be nearby.

In 1939 Haslund returned to Denmark with his collection and worked with the objects in the National Museum of Denmark during the Second World War (1940-1945). Haslund hired Inger Acton to make drawings of all the Mongol shaman's objects for his forthcoming book. She made wonderful drawings in watercolor, and in black ink.



The photo was shot after returning to the Khangan Khuri, headquarters. The man appearing in the photo is one of Haslund's men, who wears the shaman's outfit. The scene was arranged to appear as authentic as possible. (Photo: Haslund 1939).

Unfortunately, in 1948 aged only 52, a grave illness took Haslund's life in Kabul, Afghanistan, where he is buried. Seemingly, the curse had caught up with Haslund, so he was never able to complete his book about the Mongol shamans. He had not even made a table of contents for the book. Fortunately, he had written a few articles (mostly in Danish) documenting his encounters with the Mongol shamans.

In fact, Haslund had realized a couple of years before his death that he would not have time to write the shaman book. The task was therefore given to another Dane, Halfdan Siiger (1911-1999) who conducted several interviews with Haslund-Christensen and Werner Jacobsen (1914-1979) in 1945. Siiger recorded the results in a notebook, but for some reason Siiger's research on Mongol shamans failed to attract funding. Siiger nevertheless continued for a while to do research

on the Mongol shamans' objects, but soon other assignments took his time, and his research on Mongol shamans faded away into darkness. Later Siiger became professor of the History of Religion at Aarhus University.

Then in 1950, Henny Harald Hansen (1900-1993) did a study on the Mongol costumes brought to Denmark by Haslund in the 1930s. She briefly mentioned the Mongol shaman costumes as seen from a dressmaker's point of view, and she noted: "The shaman costume and its bearing on primitive Mongolian religion will be dealt with by Halfdan Siiger in a separate dissertation" (Hansen 1950:124). Henny Harald Hansen later became my teacher and colleague at the National Museum of Denmark.



Johannes Nicolaisen dressed as the Mongol shaman Dölgöre. In the National Museum of Denmark, 1946.



In 1946 the National Museum of Denmark under Haslund's leadership had a Mongolian evening for the public. The future professor of Anthropology, Johannes Nicolaisen was dressed in one of the Mongol shaman costumes (Dölgöre) and performed as a shaman. This had such a strong an impact on him that he fainted on stage. In the tent are Johannes Nicolaisen as the Mongol shaman along with Halfdan Siiger and Martha Boyer as Mongols.

Later, in the early 1990s, I became a member of the Danish Nomad Research Project, funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. As a curator at the Department of Ethnography in the National Museum of Denmark in charge of North and Central Asia I was to write three books in English on the Mongol material collected by Henning Haslund-Christensen in the 1930s: (1) Mongol Shamans, (2) Mongol Lamaism, and (3) Mongol Nomad Tools.

Happily I started right away with research on the Mongol shaman costumes and other shaman outfits kept in the National Museum of Denmark. When I re-read Henny Harald Hansen's book *Mongol Costumes*, her note on Siiger caught my attention. Disappointed that I hadn't come across Siiger's book on Mongol shamans previously, I wrote Siiger to ask him where I could find the book.

Shortly thereafter Siiger wrote back explaining that he never actually wrote the book as other interests had taken up his time. Siiger had realized, that at this



The Mongol shaman costume found in the abandoned shaman tent. Here displayed on a figure in a museum exhibition.



Dölgöre's shaman costume on a figure in a museum exhibition. Haslund was present in 1936, when the 60-year old Dölgöre was dying. They talked about what to do with the costume. Haslund wanted to take it to Denmark, but Dölgöre did not want the spirits in the dress to harm the Danes. The solution was that before he died Dölgöre trapped all the spirits in a locker which stayed in Mongolia, and Haslund took the harmless costume with him to Copenhagen.

point in his life (Siiger was more than 80 years old at the time), he would not pursue the Mongol shaman research. He felt that this younger man (i.e., me) asking for information, might finish the job, so along with his letter were all his notes, notebook and research on the matter. I was thrilled by his magnificent offer, and his work was a great help for my research, which I told him. So Siiger did not write the book on the Mongol shamans either.

After a couple of years working part-time on the manuscript, I tried to hand in a draft of the text of the book on the Mongol shaman costumes to the Committee at the Danish Nomad Research Project. At a committee meeting near the end of September 1990 the chairman told us that my draft was not good. He might have been right, but as neither he nor any other committee member at that time had



The Mongol shaman Basamen was killed in 1936 by a Japanese train he wanted to stop in order to get rid of the occupying Japanese. As thanks to Haslund for finding the body of the dead Basaman, Haslund was given the costume, which still had all its spirits. Here seen in a museum exhibition at the National Museum of Denmark.

seen the text or read any part of it, I was really shocked by this statement. To assure that no one would lose face it was decided that the draft would be left at the bottom of the pile of manuscripts for review. And there it stayed for many years. It was also decided that I probably could not write the two other books either, so the task of writing about the Mongol nomad tools was given to Christal Braae, who has written an excellent book on that. No one has ever worked on the Mongol lamaistic collection amassed by Haslund.

For four years (1992-1996) the National Museum of Denmark had a 500 m² exhibition, entitled “The Mongols – Nomads of the Steppe”, based on the museum’s own Mongol collections, mostly gathered by Haslund. The last of the eleven rooms dealt with the Mongol shamans and their costumes and objects. All the Mongol shaman costumes and objects were on display. The exhibition was visited by half a million people. Since the exhibition was dismantled to make room for other exhibitions, many people from both within and outside the museum have suggested that a shaman exhibition be on display in the early 2000s. The museum actually had one shaman exhibition way back in 1974 called “Ånder og Mennesker” (Spirits and Humans). But 25 years had passed, so it would be a good time to show the objects again in a modern way. I created an exhibition outline with two options, one using only artifacts already in the museum and another with the addition of loans from other museums outside Denmark. Despite great interest, my proposal was turned down, because it had too many details. So the much wanted exhibition never took place. Was the curse at work here?

In 1996 the Carlsberg Foundation wanted to terminate the nomad research program, which was only planned to last for a 10 year period and this had already been exceeded. In a letter from the committee in February 1995 I was asked for a print-ready manuscript before the end of July 1996. It was impossible for me to finish a 300 page manuscript in a foreign language in such a short time, as I also had my work at the museum to take care of at the same time. So the Mongol shaman book was not published in the Nomad-series as had been the idea from the beginning.

In 2004 I was invited to prepare a paper for the *Festschrift* in honor of Åke Hultkrantz (1920-2006). I chose to write about Mongol shaman helping spirits (onghots) from the Haslund collection. In the end, my paper was turned down and never appeared. There was not much help from the helping spirits.

The National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen has a tradition of granting periodically offering each of its curators the opportunity of a full year to concen-



In January 1939 Henning Haslund-Christensen and Werner Jacobsen together visited the Mongol Shaman Puvua, who lived in the Chahar area of Inner Mongolia. Both Haslund and Jacobsen told about their meeting with her, but neither mentions that they were there together. However, this is known from the interviews Siiger recorded in his notebook in February 1945. Puvua foretold that Haslund would become deadly ill, but soon recover completely. This actually happened a year later. She also told Jacobsen that he would die in Mongolia. He never returned there, and died in Denmark. According to Christel Braae og Benedrikte Møller Kristensen the picture is not of Puvua, but a local Mongol girl, as a shaman in her shaman outfit never would use a common hat and also wear her common Chakhar jewellery. Also notice that a hand is in the back holding the horse sticks in order to have them in the picture. Haslund-Christensen often had a Mongol dressed up in a shaman costume when he wanted a photo taken of the dress. (Photo: Haslund 1939).

trate on a research project. In 2005 it was my turn. I chose the Mongol shamans as most of the research work was already done, and it mostly needed to be written in a comprehensible form. This time it looked as if a finished book lay in sight. After the year, there was a 300-page draft for a book (including text and illustrations), and this was sent to a peer-reviewer abroad. Several years passed, but without any response. The text was also given to another person for English language editing. Only the first chapter was done. The book was expected to appear in the series, *Etnografisk Række*, published by the National Museum of Denmark, and the production costs were actually established. However in 2006 I was retired – and the book died yet again. Actually, I should have been aware that a problem might easily arise when dealing with the world of magic, because my former teacher Kaj Birket-Smith (1893-1977) told us the following in a university class in 1962 which I quoted in my thesis defence on the subject “Shamanism” in 1971:

It is not for just anyone to tangle with a highly charged electrical cable. Nor is everyone endowed with the ability to deal with and influence kings and statesmen. Only those with experience in such things should try it. Precisely the same is valid for the relations with supernatural powers, and here the intermediary is the shaman.

And a shaman I am not. It is obvious that the curse clings to these powerful objects of the Mongol shamans. And what can we learn from this? Do not mingle with magic objects, when the force is not on your side. So there is still no book on the Mongol shaman's objects collected by Haslund and placed in the National Museum of Denmark.

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Rolf Gilberg (born 1942). Magister (Mag.Scient.) 1971, Ph.D. 1995, both in Ethnography (Anthropology) at the University of Copenhagen. Curator (1971-2007) in charge of the collections from North and Central Asia at the Department of Ethnography in the National Museum of Denmark. Teacher at DIS Study Program (1986-1991) for a course on the Arctic Peoples. RG have written about 300 articles, papers or books on: Polar-Eskimos in North Greenland (Thule), Knud Rasmussen, Shamanism, Lamaism, Mongolia, North American Indians, Sami People, Physical anthropology, museology. Chairman of the Danish Mongolian Society since 1990.

12. The Controversial Source of the Amu Darya (Oxus)

Jens Soelberg

During the 3rd Danish Pamir Expedition in 2010, I was able to track the main stream of the Panj River and thus the Amu Darya (aka Oxus), and observe all the major confluences in the Wakhan Corridor, Afghanistan. If beginning at Lake Aral in Uzbekistan, passing by Termiz (Fig. 1) and always following the greater stream at all confluences, one will arrive in Big Pamir (Afghanistan) to see that the Panj issues from the Waghjir valley. On the 28th of August I reached the upper part of named valley, where the Waghjir pass leads to China, and was able to confirm that the Panj indeed streams from two glacier-caves, as documented by Lord Curzon in 1896. The position was N37°02.290, E074°29.655 at an altitude of 4540 m.a.s.l. (Fig. 3). Because the entrances to the caves were blocked by fallen ice, it was not possible to proceed to determine whether the caves are a result of surface melt-water exiting or geothermal activity.



Fig. 1. Eastward view of the Amu Darya at the border cross between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

The river Oxus – the ancient Greek name for Amu Darya – has an almost mythological connotation as the “cradle of mankind” and one of the great barriers of the ancient world that any imperial army would have to negotiate. Traditionally the dividing line between Persia and Turkestan, it is still the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The great river has changed its course several times through history, shifting its outlet from the Caspian Sea to the Aral Sea. The Amu Darya has always lent itself to irrigation, allowing many cultures to flourish along its banks. However many regard it a tragedy that the intense irrigation of the cotton industry initiated by the USSR, takes such a toll that the water no longer reaches the Aral, which consequently has been reduced to a fraction of its former size.

The Oxus – the name might be derived from the Turkic “Ak-su” meaning “white water” – had a prominent position even in ancient geographical discourse, and has indeed since. Both Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan were aware of the Oxus, as they both crossed it with great armies, but its geographical recognition can be traced back even further. Olufsen (1904) traces the Oxus back to the Zoroastrian myths which celebrate it as “the garden of our parents”. The Arabian geographers were aware that the Pamirs were the birthplace of the river (which receives no major tributaries once it has left these mountains), and were even aware that its upper reaches were known as Panj Darya, the river of five, as it still is known today.

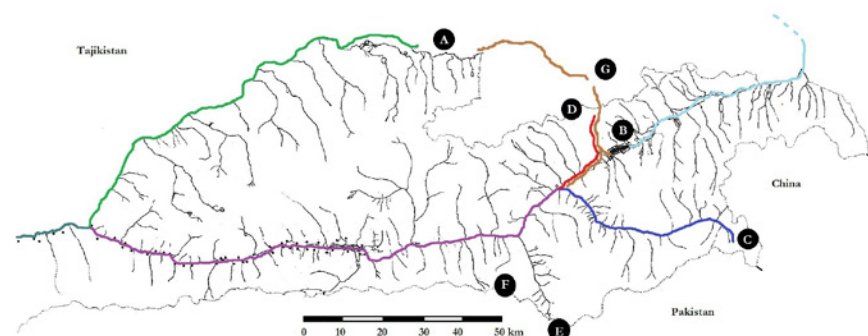


Fig. 2. Map of the sources of Amu Darya. A: Zorkul lake. B: Chaqmatin lake (eastern outlet). C: The glacier in upper Waghjir valley. D: The stream from Burgut-valley. E and F: Tributaries from Bai Qara and other valleys in Hindukush. G: the permanent snow in the Nicholas range.

Olufsen gives an excellent presentation of the possible five sources to which Panj owes its name. He assumed that its main source is the stream from Burgut valley (Fig. 2D), which is then joined by three rivers stemming from the Hindu Kush: the Waghjir (Fig. 2C), the Bai Qara (Fig. 2E) and a lesser river Olufsen calls Shorshil (possibly Fig. 2F), and finally the Pamir River stemming from Lake Zorkul (Fig. 2A) (Olufsen 1904). Note that the Chaqmatin lake (Fig. 2B) empties out at its eastern end, to form the Aksu/Murghab River.

The first known attempt to reach the source of the Oxus was that of the British explorer John Wood in 1837-38, who followed the Pamir River from its confluence with the Panj, up to Lake Zorkul, which he called Lake Victoria (Fig. 2A)(Wood 1872). Wood’s claim of Lake Zorkul as the source was however dismissed and criticized by later explorers, since the Pamir River is the smaller stream at its confluence with the Panj. The interest in the source of the Amu Darya became somewhat of an obsession of the British, and the subject was discussed at length in the British Royal Geographical Society (Lord Roberts, T. Gordon, Colonel Trotter, F. Younghusband, N. Curzon 1896). The main competing propositions were: 1) The Aksu/Murghab River, beginning at the eastern end of Chaqmatin Lake doing a great loop through the northern Tajik Pamirs to join the Amu Darya north of Iskashim (Fig. 2B). The argument being that this is the longer course, the counter-argument being that the Aksu is smaller than the Panj River at their confluence, and can thus only be considered a tributary. 2) The Panj, stemming, as documented by Lord Curzon, from two caves in a glacier in the upper extreme of the Waghjir valley (Fig. 2C). Curzon published a monograph on the Pamirs and the source of the Oxus (Curzon, 1896), and many regard his arguments to be superior, both on empirical grounds and for romantic reasons; the majestic glacier with two glacier-caves being a fitting source for a majestic river. 3) A third argument was promoted by the 1895 Boundary Commission: that the snow of the mountains of the Nicholas range should be considered the source of Amu Darya since they feed the Zorkul lake, the Chaqmatin lake and the Burgut stream which flows into the upper Panj (Fig. 2G). An expedition in 2007 (Colegrave & Coleman 2007) observed that the Burgut stream flows into both the Chaqmatin and into the upper Panj, and claimed that the Burgut, which they call Chelab, is the source. The two last theories elegantly trace two or more major tributaries to one geographical point. However, as observed in 2010, the greater stream in the upper Panj is the one stemming from the glacier in Waghjir valley.



Fig. 3. The source of the Amu Darya in the Waghjir valley in Little Pamir, Afghanistan.

The 3rd Danish Pamir Expedition in 2010 was dedicated to ethnobotanical studies among the agro-pastoralist Wakhi and the nomadic Kyrgyz in the Wakhan and Pamir of Afghanistan. Members of the expedition were Jens Soelberg and interpreter and guide Gorg Ali Khairkhah. The 1st and 2nd Danish Pamir Expeditions 1896/97 and 1898/99 were led by First Lieutenant Ole Olufsen and include among their comprehensive results the first maps of the Wakhan valley and the first detailed ethnographical descriptions of the Wakhi and the Kyrgyz nomads of the present-day Tajik Pamirs. The first expeditions took place in the epicentre of the Great Game of the British and Russian empires, in the Russian-controlled Pamirs of present day Tajikistan, but were barred from the Big and Little Pamir of present-day Afghanistan.

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13. Yurt Material in the Afghan Pamir

Jens Soelberg

The yurt is the principal dwelling of the Afghan Kyrgyz, an essential element of their nomadic life-style. Called an *üüj*, meaning home or house, it is the housing unit occupied by one, or sometimes two families. The yurt consist mainly of felt and wood, yet the Kyrgyz of the Afghan Pamir live more than 4000 m.a.s.l., and thus above the tree line. In short, the Kyrgyz yurt consists of the *kepere*, a self-supporting circular frame consisting of a number of collapsible wooden lattices, broken only by a wooden doorframe (Fig. 1b). The *kepere* supports the roof poles, the *wuuk* (Fig. 1i), lengthy wooden poles bent at an angle at the lower end, and sharpened at the upper to fit into the drilled holes of the crown, the *tündük* (Fig. 1c-d). The wooden construction is tied up with strings and straps made of yak-hair (Fig. 1h) and covered with felt blankets (Fig. 1e-f). Several times during the 3rd Danish Pamir Expedition in 2010 I was privileged to witness the raising of yurts (Fig. 1) and timed the process to take between 30-60 minutes depending on the level of miscellaneous maintenance undertaken.

Kyrgyz key informants, one of whom was a full-time yurt-craftsman, related that the wood required for the construction is taken from the forests alongside rivers in the un-inhabited areas in the lower (western) parts of Big and Little Pamir, between approx. 3000 and 3800 m.a.s.l. They told us that the *kepere* and the *wuuk* are made from the tree *kyrchyn*, which they confirmed *in situ* (by dried voucher specimens) to be *Salix sp.* (willow). The *tündük* is made of a tree known as *kaii'ing*, confirmed to be to *Betula sp.* (birch). Wood samples were obtained, with permission from the yurt owners, from the three wooden elements of the yurt, and anatomically confirmed to indeed be wood of *Salix* (Fig. 2e, 2f) and *Betula* (Fig. 2a).

In the Waghjir valley, at the far eastern end of the Wakhan Corridor, the expedition came across a small, foreign looking hut. It was presumed to be a remnant of the Soviet military presence in Little Pamir which lasted until 1989. This



Fig. 1. Raising of a Kyrgyz yurt. a. Unloading. b. Setup of kepere. c-d. Fitting of wuuk and tündük. e. Fitting of felt-covers. f. Complete. g. The entire wooden construction collapsed. h. Straps. i. Headman Muhammed Ayoub fitting a wuuk-pole.

suspicion was indirectly confirmed as the wood samples taken from pillars and roof revealed themselves to be of *Larix* sp. (Fig. 2c). Wood from a larch tree must have arrived to the Pamirs from a much more northern, boreal region. Remnants of both wooden and metal military equipment (e.g. tank parts) were sometimes seen incorporated into traditional constructions of both the Kyrgyz nomads and their agro-pastoralist neighbours, the Wakhi.

The Wakhi, it appears, have for some time begun using the yurt in the summer pastures in both Big and Little Pamir, sometimes in combination with their traditional stone huts. Traditionally they do not manufacture the yurts themselves but put in an order with a Kyrgyz craftsman and bring him the required wood (and possibly also the wool). Thus the Wakhi could confirm the use of *Salix* and *Betula*. The barter value of a yurt supposedly is about 6 yaks, the *tündük* itself being worth one yak. As a consequence some Wakhi have begun experimenting with building their own yurts with some successful, and some failed attempts. The expedition came across one Wakhi man raising his new yurt who confided that he had constructed his *tündük* from *yars* (Wakhi), which was botanically identified to be *Juniperus* sp. (Fig. 2b). Kyrgyz yurt-builders claimed, however, that a *tündük* made from *Juniperus* was unlikely to last many years.

When asked whether *Salix* and *Betula* were the preferred materials for yurt-building the Kyrgyz reply was positive for *Betula*, in which the main quality sought is flexibility, but negative for *Salix*. Every Kyrgyz specifically asked about yurt materials would mention that in Kashgar or “Kashgaria”, in present day China, exists a much superior, “stronger” material, namely *qara-sögöd* and/or *sary-sögöd* (*qara* and *sary* means “black” and “yellow” respectively), but that since the closing of the border this wood has not been available to them. Chinese authorities shut down the ancient trade route in 1948, in the wake of the Communist Revolution (Shahrani 2002 [1979]). A search was initiated for old yurts made with *sögöd* and one found in headman Törsum-boi’s camp in Little Pamir. If imported from China the wood had to be at the very least 62 years old; indeed the owners claimed the yurt to be more than a hundred years old. When carving out a sample, the exoticness of the wood was apparent: it had distinct brown heart-wood, which was not observed in any other wood in the Wakhan Corridor. This fact supports the Kyrgyz assertion that this particular wood was of a stronger kind, as heartwood is a result of a process in which the inner xylem of a tree is filled with resin, gums and waxes which changes the properties of the wood. When surveyed under microscope the presence of simple vessel perforations and

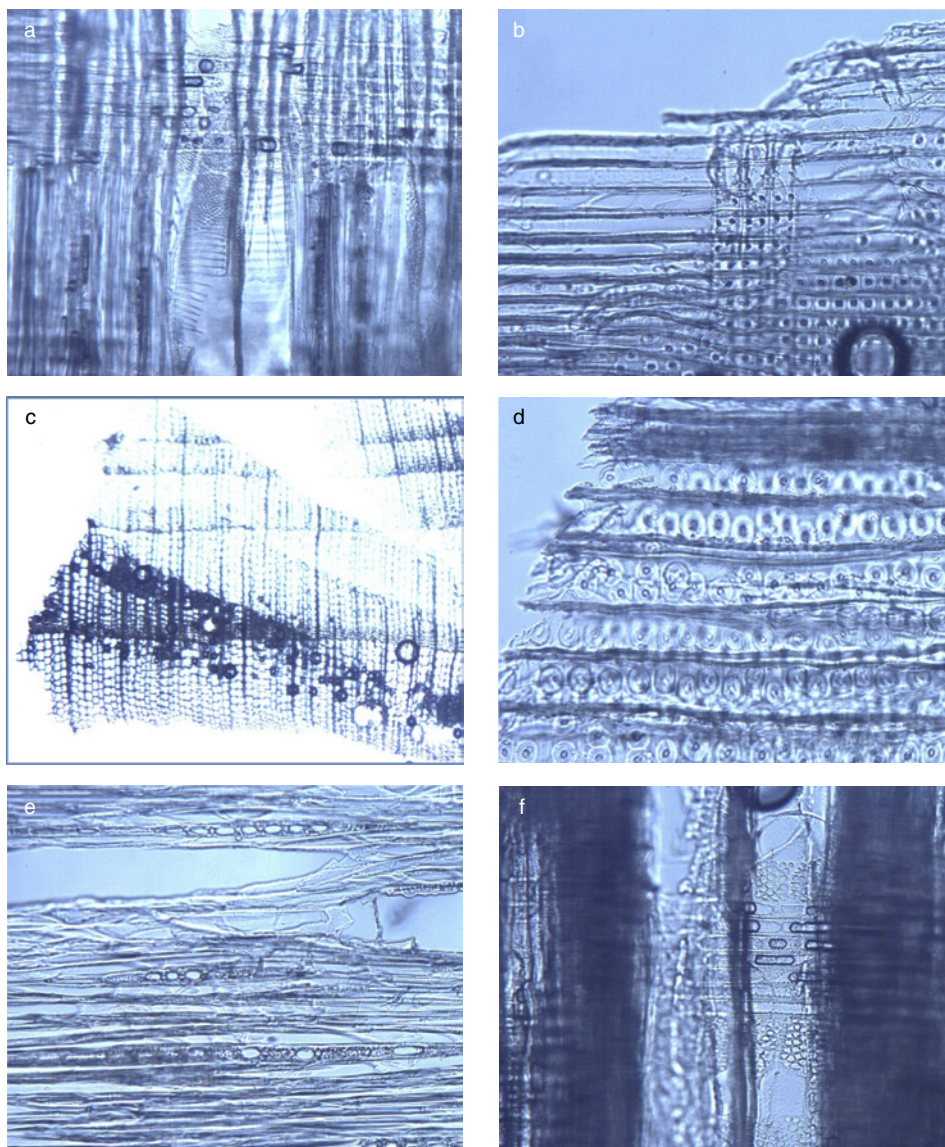


Fig. 2. Wood samples. a. Betulaceae: *Betula* sp., 25X, radial section. b. Cupressaceae: *Juniperus* sp., 25X, radial section. c. Pinaceae *Larix* sp., 4X, tangential section. d. *Larix* sp., 25X, radial section. e. Salicaceae: *Salix* sp., 25X, tangential section. f. *Salix* sp., 25X, radial section.

cross field pits organized in rows, determined the sample likewise to be wood of a *Salix* sp (Fig. 2e, 2f). However, no *Salix* species in the Wakhan Corridor exhibits distinct heartwood, at least not at the appropriate age for use in yurt-building. The local knowledge of a superior Chinese wood material and indeed its presence in older yurts is telling of how the now extinguished Silk Road trade facilitated a greater availability of materials and products not only on an intercontinental scale, but also on smaller, regional scale, as in the case of acquiring materials for a yurt to outlast generations.

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14. On Collections and Collectors

The Double Gaze of Museum Collections

Ulrik Høj Johnsen

In the autumn of 1947, a Danish expedition set out from Copenhagen for Central Asia. The first group consisted of the historian of religions Halfdan Siiger, the botanist Lennart Edelberg, the medical doctor and zoologist Knud Paludan, and the leader of the expedition Henning Haslund-Christensen. They were the spearhead of the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, which has since become a milestone in the history of Danish research and museum enterprise. Following two earlier expeditions to Mongolia in the 1930s, the efforts of Haslund culminated in this third expedition which included scientists from a number of academic disciplines. During his first two expeditions in 1936/37 and 1938/39, Haslund had collected some 3,000 ethnographic objects, 567 manuscripts and 3,000 finds (Braae, 2007:86). The first expedition was a one-man reconnaissance expedition on a limited budget, but the second was funded by the Danish State and the Carlsberg Foundation, and it included the linguist Kaare Grønbech and archaeologist Werner Jacobsen. Haslund started to form the ambitious plan of a multidisciplinary expedition in the late 1920s, but it was finally planned in the period from 1937 to 1947 (Ibid: 76). Curator at the National Museum Christel Braae is about to publish an extensive publication on Haslund's two first expeditions to Mongolia.

Besides ethnographical studies, the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia was intended to cover scientific work in the fields of botany, cultural geography, zoology, ornithology and geology, in the area from Mongolia in the east to Afghanistan in the west. The ambition was to shed light on the blank spaces of the map of Central Asia through scientific investigations and collections. The untimely death of Haslund in Kabul in September 1948 was a major setback for the expedition. Furthermore, the political and military turmoil in Tibet and China meant that parts of the expedition programme could not be carried out as planned,



Gandao wooden ancestor figures at the graveyard. Photo taken by Halfdan Siiger, 1948.

although important parts of the expedition were, nevertheless, carried out more or less according to the original plan. Among these were the projects of Halfdan Siiger among the Kalasha in north-western Pakistan and the Lepchas in Sikkim. Today, Siiger's material from the Kalasha forms an important part of the unique collection that Moesgaard Museum is holding from the Hindu Kush mountain range, and the present chapter will focus on this material.

Siiger's research foci were not only religious life and cosmology; he was also given ethnographic tasks on the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, including the collection of artefacts among the ethnic groups he studied, such as the

Kalasha in the principality of Chitral in Pakistan, bordering on the Afghan province of Nuristan. There he collected a number of artefacts, including household items, clothes, wooden ancestor figurines, jewellery, weapons, etc. The artefacts, which were collected by Siiger and other expedition members, were sent to Copenhagen where they were registered and placed in storage for further study and future exhibitions. Later, in the mid-1960s, the artefacts collected by Edelberg in Nuristan and by Siiger among the Kalasha were transferred to the Ethnological Study Collection in Aarhus, which was established in 1953 on the initiative of P.V. Glob, then professor of archaeology and director of the Prehistoric Museum in Aarhus (which would become Moesgaard Museum in 1970). The study collection was established in close cooperation between the Prehistoric Museum and the University of Aarhus. From 1957, the ethnographer Klaus Ferdinand, a student of Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, was associated with both institutions in his capacity as lecturer of cultural geography, and he was given responsibility for the collections. From this year onwards, Ferdinand developed the academic discipline of ethnography in Aarhus, and he started teaching ethnography to a handful of students from 1963. At the same time, he took care of the Ethnological Study Collection, the name of which was later changed to the Ethnographic Collections. Until 1999, the study collection was owned by Aarhus University, and afterwards it became a museum collection belonging to Moesgaard Museum.

The artefacts and photos collected in the Hindu Kush by Siiger during the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia are today placed in storage at Moesgaard Museum and the National Museum of Denmark. This chapter discusses the potentials of these museum collections brought to Denmark more than 60 years ago. The significance of these collections and the expeditions as such has not been diminished with the passing of time. On the contrary, this material offers unique insights not only into the lives of the people whom the expedition members met in Asia from 1947 onwards, but also into Danish national and regional issues of that time. In addition to its historical explanatory force, the material collected by Siiger today is a part of local cultural heritages, which often is impossible to find in its place of origin. Foreign institutions holding cultural heritage from cultures such as the Kalasha, are increasingly receiving attention from members of the communities from which they have been collected, and collaborations are thus beginning to emerge. The chapter in this publication by Taj Khan Kalash and Jan Heegård shows that the Kalasha consider the material collected by Siiger in the late 1940s to be a highly valuable asset.

Futhermore, the material offers an insight into a decisive epoch for Danish scientific research and museum enterprise. Material from the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia (which includes artefacts as well as photos, sound and film recordings along with the extensive research archives of the expedition members) offers what can be called a “double gaze”. As I shall argue, this double gaze offers us not merely a glimpse into Danish museum enterprise, but in fact also into Danish scientific research history as also pointed out in Esther Fihl’s chapter.

Ethnographical self-reflection

At the time when Siiger participated in the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, ethnography as an academic discipline took decisive steps forward. In Denmark, the discipline was established at the University of Copenhagen in 1945, where the cultural geographer Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith played a cardinal role based upon his position as keeper at the National Museum of Denmark. From the 1950s onwards, this rather small academic discipline in Copenhagen became still more oriented towards international – and especially British – theoretical trends such as the structural functionalism of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. French theoretical influences also appeared, and especially after the late 1960s, the Marxist influence – in different shades – invaded the lecture rooms and conference halls. As a result, the overall focus of the discipline changed dramatically; the majority of the students rebelled in the 1970s, turning away from the “old ethnography”, which many of them considered to be hopelessly unmodern and enmeshed in the vanishing colonial world order. They looked instead towards a more theoretical, sociological, and even directly political approach to culture (Ole Høiris 1999:89-90, Ebbe Poulsen 1999:97-100). In many ways, this reinterpretation of the discipline appeared at the expense of more classical ethnographical approach with its clear link to material culture and museums. Around this time, the discipline name “Social Anthropology” was added to “Ethnography” in Aarhus.³⁷ In some ways, a gap was thus created between the ethnography of the museum and the academic discipline more focused on social anthropology; this gap had not been there in the 1940s and 1950s. As a result, the importance of material culture changed in Aarhus during the 1960s and especially the 1970s.

³⁷ Even today, there are still a few conceptual problems when it comes to understanding the implications of the difference between ethnography and anthropology.

After the dramatic turn of the discipline in the 1970s – away from a focus on material culture and towards Marxism and social anthropology – what followed in the 1980s and 1990s has become known among ethnographers and anthropologists as an identity crisis, fuelled especially by the disappearance of the “native other”, as formulated by for instance Thomas Hylland Eriksen in a lecture given in Aarhus in May 2013. There was a strong focus on the role of the ethnographer himself and on the production of knowledge. How did the subjectivity of the ethnographer influence the scientific results? Is it in fact possible to draw any scientific conclusions at all without influencing the result? Similar questions have been raised by recent scholars such as Bruno Latour (1979) and John Law (2004).

Any ethnographer having carried out fieldwork knows that the fieldworker selects pieces of information and artefacts from a much larger pool of potential information and artefacts. Scientific investigations in a laboratory – or in a museum – should be understood as the result of the subjective decisions of the researcher. The scientific process of producing data which Latour and Law are concerned with – or the process of collecting for a museum, one could add – does not resemble an unbiased search for truth. The question of whether it



Shoes, Moesgaard Museum. Inv. No. EA 131-1196.

is possible for an ethnographer or anthropologist to contribute anything at all valid to science may thus be answered in the affirmative, but with the fundamental premise that we cannot fully understand our scientific results *without* taking the thinking, planning, collecting, interpreting, analysing, writing, communicating scientist into consideration. And, as this chapter argues, nor can we do so without considering the scientific and institutional frameworks within which the scientist works. It is within this frame of reference that the present chapter focuses on the potential of museum collections such as those assembled during the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia. Applying the insights gained from the self-reflection of the academic discipline upon ethnographical museum collections, new possibilities for exploring our collections appear: a double gaze of museum collections.

The double gaze of museum collections

Within the terminology of the museum enterprise, the connection between collector and collection is obvious. The words “collection” and “collector” are two sides of the same coin, and they must necessarily be understood in relation to each other. Museum collections may take many forms, and they are often put on display in exhibition halls where the material represents for instance a country, an ethnic group or a certain theme. The tangibility of museum artefacts has a directly objectifying character – they often stand as physical manifestations of what is being represented. Some curators would argue that, on the contrary, the objects on display represent nothing but themselves in their own right. One way or the other, both the process of collecting and the presentation of the material in exhibitions are subjective processes.

As Esther Fihl remarks elsewhere in this volume, museum collections do not therefore only offer a glance at – or a vision of – the world out there: they also offer a glimpse of the people who made the collections, and the academic, institutional, even societal context within which the collectors operated (see also Fihl 2002:33). We must, therefore, examine the potential of this double gaze aspect of the collections in order to gain a better understanding of them. When we pay attention to how an expedition or field project was prepared, carried out and evaluated, we often encounter surprising, new angles on practical, theoretical and methodological questions. We have to look over the collector’s shoulder, so



Purse and shooting equipment. Moesgaard Museum, inv.no. EA 131-1240.

to speak, in order to understand the full context of the collection. Even what may appear to be minor details, such as personal notes written with small, shaky letters in the margins of notebooks, may very well be details that hold great importance for the final product. How did the collector interact with people during fieldwork? Which challenges did he or she meet? Which personal and academic interests did the collector have or represent? Are there any letters to family or friends that can reveal personal reflections not available in the archives? Did he or she collect with the specific purpose of having the material exhibited? Was the collector inspired or asked by a curator to purchase certain objects? Did the gender of the collector open or close doors during fieldwork? Which barriers did he or she meet in the field?

Being members of the same expedition, Siiger and Edelberg had a lot in common. They were both Danish scientists doing fieldwork with ethnographic tasks in the same remote area in the Hindu Kush in the 1940s. But still, each their own fieldwork turned out to be quite different. Where Edelberg seems to have had easy access to the Nuristani community on the Afghan side of the border, Siiger apparently had a more difficult time among the Kalasha on the other side of the border. Why is that? There are many possible answers. One important aspect is that Edelberg, who was a botanist, easily found common ground with his informants. He knew a lot about the local crops and fauna, and who would not want to speak to a foreigner who might help secure a bet-

ter yield? Siiger, on the other hand, was a Theologian and Historian of Religions. His approach to his informants concerned their beliefs, cosmology, and ritual traditions; often, Siiger's invitations to dialogue were declined, and he was directed instead to the ritual specialists. It is simply easier to start a conversation (that could lead into a number of interesting directions for an ethnographic fieldworker) about botany than about religion. If one digs into the notebooks of Siiger and Edelberg respectively, one discovers more possible



Ancestor effigy collected by Siiger on the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia.

explanations of the different nature of their relations to for example local collaborators, who could both promote and harm the interests of the fieldworker. If either of the gentlemen had been accompanied by their wives or had had a female companion, they would probably also have had the opportunity to enter the female spheres of the Nuristani and the Kalasha communities. So, even the gender of a fieldworker opens up and closes down possibilities for his or her ethnographic endeavour.

Now let us return to the theoretical implications of the argument of this chapter. Museum collections can hardly be understood to be objective representations of life in a certain area in a certain period of time. Rather, we are left with the premise that collections provide us with a still image in time and space of a culture or a theme *provided by a certain person*. Two fieldworkers operating in the same area at the same time can also reach different conclusions, depending on their different approaches and interpretations. There are numerous examples of disputes based on different interpretations of the same object, phenomenon or ritual. This, however, does not make collections as such less interesting or less valid from my point of view. Perhaps even the contrary, as we are also offered a gaze into the context of the collections. This potential of the double gaze therefore leads us to a better understanding of the history of museum enterprise and/or academic perspectives.

As mentioned earlier, ethnography and anthropology as academic disciplines have been and are still exposed to some of their own analytical tools with thought-provoking effects. The research history of the scientific disciplines represented on the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, in this connection with a particular focus on ethnography, will give ethnographers and ethnographical collectors a better understanding of their own professional identity and possibilities today. By analysing the museum collections – understood in a broad sense as including not only objects but also research archives, photos, recordings of film and sound – we often find details revealing the mind-sets and societal patterns in which the scientist-collector was enmeshed.³⁸ In other words, it opens up a chapter in the cultural history of ethnography.

³⁸ This point is made by Dr. Esther Fihl in her doctoral thesis "Exploring Central Asia". In Fihl's frame of reference, collections can be understood as written documents having the potential to reveal thought patterns which dominated the scholar and/or collector, having produced the collections.

Exploring Siiger's collection from the Kalasha

Now, the question is what we can learn from the objects and information collected by Siiger more than 60 years ago. The material collected illustrates some aspects of life among an ethnic minority living in faraway mountains in the Hindu Kush mountain range, relatively untouched by influences from outside. The Kalasha were chosen as an object of study because of their pre-Islamic and animistic religion, which some scholars trace back to an original Indo-European population. Although some of the objects and information collected by Siiger among the Kalasha were intended to represent their daily life in the 1940s (such as mythology, etc.), the primary focus was objects that described the pure cultural form of the Kalasha, in particular their religion, and objects connected with religious beliefs. This is no coincidence.

The scientific framework of the expedition was heavily inspired by Birket-Smith, who was keeper at the Ethnographic Department at the National Museum of Denmark from 1940 until 1963. Moreover, he is considered to be the founding father of ethnography in Denmark. Like his teacher, Hans Peter Steensby, Birket-Smith graduated in Geography and Natural History with Ethnography as a specialisation. As the title of Birket-Smith's main work, *Kulturens Veje (Paths of Culture)* from 1941-1942 indicates, he focused on the diffusion of cultural phenomena. Through historical reconstructions, he for instance aimed at understanding the migration of ethnic groups and the spread of cultural ideas and traditions in time and space. If we again turn towards the ancient culture of the Kalasha, it must for Birket-Smith have represented a unique opportunity to study a relatively untouched group, sharing the roots of the entire Indo-European culture group to which also Europeans belong. This would also partly be the case for the Nuristanis among whom Edelberg carried out fieldwork during the expedition; the difference was that the Nuristanis had been forcefully converted to Islam in 1896; many reminiscences from the pre-Islamic period were still to be found in the late 1940s, however. Therefore, objects with reference to modernity or cultural change were less interesting – at least for Birket-Smith, who wanted to document and represent a “pure” culture of an ethnic group in the exhibition halls of the National Museum in Copenhagen.

Following this line of thinking, what Siiger and Edelberg were to observe in the distant and almost inaccessible mountains would have been some of the cultural traits that were supposedly lost centuries ago here in Europe. For many anthropologists today, this line of reasoning is close to unthinkable, as it resembles an

evolutionism today considered “politically incorrect” – but in the 1940s, the argument seemed rather straightforward. It should be remembered that ethnography was back then often considered a practical tool for archaeologists seeking answers about excavated archaeological objects among living peoples. For Birket-Smith and others of that time, studying the mountain people of the Hindu Kush could potentially reveal a great deal, not only about migration, but also about a shared, although very distant, Indo-European past. Linguistics as a discipline had important tools to offer in this endeavour, just as it has today. On the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, anthropometric measurements were also carried out in order to establish possible patterns of migration, although the measuring often placed the collectors in awkward positions in relation to their informants. Today, DNA is a much more efficient and less problematic tool for a fieldworker trying to establish more or less equal relationships with informants. Actually, Siiger only carried out 712 measurements among the Kalasha, the Lepcha and the Boros in total, whereas, in comparison, Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, on the Henning Haslund-Christensen Memorial Expedition 1953-1955, did manage to fill out 5000 measurement forms, each representing a fleeing Tibetan who had crossed the border to India. The results of the study were published in a famous work at the time, which Siiger contributed to (HRH Prince Peter 1966).

The ethnographic collectors on the expedition were trained by Haslund, but supposedly also heavily inspired by Birket-Smith, who wanted objects to put on display in the exhibition halls of the National Museum. His collecting strategy was to:

...avoid to create collections based on coincidence, full of holes and therefore without any scientific or educational value [...] instead, collecting activity should concentrate upon selected cultural forms, from which it is possible to obtain a comprehensive representation, and which viewed together form a firm and natural whole. (Ferdinand 1999:34)

Special attention was paid to societies facing major cultural and social change, in order to rescue cultural manifestations from oblivion. Furthermore, it was stressed in the instructions from Birket-Smith to the collectors that they should focus on the geographical adaptation of the culture to the environment – an interest which Birket-Smith had inherited from his own teachers, H.P. Steensby and Gudmund Hatt. When exploring the collections of Siiger and the other members of the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, one has to consider the context of the expedition and the visions of Birket-Smith and the expedition organiser and lead-

er, Haslund. As Svend Castenfeldt describes elsewhere in this publication, Siiger encountered pitfalls when doing fieldwork among the Kalasha. The author of this chapter has not (yet) had the possibility to explore Siiger's research archives, but further investigations will undoubtedly shed more light on his sources of inspiration and motivations – and perhaps also on the question of why he never returned to the Kalasha. A future research project will provide good opportunities not only for going into detail with Siiger's collections, but also for making a comparative analysis with collections by Lennart Edelberg and others. A project of this kind could explore Siiger's collections at Moesgaard Museum, which do not only include more than 200 artefacts, but also his extensive research archives including diaries, photos, maps, etc. They constitute a vital part of the unique ethnographical material from the Hindu Kush mountain range, accumulated through Siiger's and Edelberg's fieldworks from the 1940s up until 1970 along with that of ethnographers in the Hindu Kush during the 1980s and 1990s. Fortunately, material from the Hindu Kush has enjoyed renewed attention in the new millennium, as there are plans to take advantage of some of it in future research projects.

The value of these collections from the 1940s is, as mentioned earlier, not only historical. A growing number of representatives from "source communities" are becoming aware of the value and potential of those parts of their cultural heritage that are kept safe in institutions such as museums. A Kalasha school teacher, Engineer Khan, has in collaboration with Svend Castenfeldt prepared a school book with photos taken by Siiger during his stay in 1948 with the Kalasha. As Kalash and Heegård describe in their chapter, the Kalasha are becoming increasingly aware of their cultural history and historical documentation in the form of photos and artefacts which are crucial to cultural and religious awareness-building. Likewise, both the Lepcha community in Sikkim and the Boro community in Assam, as shown in the chapters by Torri and Lepcha and Andersen and Søren, are experiencing a revitalization of cultural heritage described and/or collected by Siiger during the expedition.

Concluding remarks

The collections made during the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia offer a unique window to a period of time in which ethnography was undergoing rapid change. Ethnography was established as an academic discipline in Copenhagen

in 1945, and museum ethnography was about to change dramatically. The 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia was the last major Danish expedition to be carried out within the old paradigm of shedding light on the blank spots of the world map. For ethnographers, the mode of fieldwork introduced by Bronislaw Malinowski, where the solitary ethnographer stays in one place over a long time span, soon became the standard method whenever possible. The earlier institution of the expedition, with its almost military connotations, was abandoned (Nielsen, 2012:10). Viewing the expedition under Haslund's leadership as a cultural world of its own, with certain research agendas, practices and systems of beliefs, we as ethnographers can study this culture through its outcomes, such as reports, books, and the museum collections available today.

Boldly written, one could say that I myself have been on the same mission as Siiger and Edelberg, who conducted fieldwork in the Hindu Kush. The artefacts that they encountered and brought home to illustrate a "pagan" past belonging to the so-called *Kafirs*, I am now using to identify the specific culture of the expedition. So, the double gaze of the museum collection offers both an introduction to a *Kafir* past, but indeed also to the roots of Danish ethnography as an academic discipline and to an important stage in Danish museum enterprise. At the same time, the collected material is a part of the cultural heritage of the communities among whom Siiger collected, and both culturally, politically and religiously this cultural heritage is crucial for these communities today.

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Epilogue

The Danish tradition of research in Central Asia is strong and extensive. Ole Olufsen’s two expeditions in 1896-1897 and 1898-1899 initially signaled this focus of research, and Henning Haslund-Christensen’s three Danish expeditions in 1936, 1938-1939 and 1947 until his death in 1948 were the direct and logical extension of that. The Danish initiative lent strength to this field of research, culminating in publications, museum collections and exhibitions. It also meant that researchers from various parts of the world with an interest in Central Asia have at times found themselves oriented towards Denmark, as this publication demonstrates.

Halfdan Siiger played a significant role in shaping the Danish research tradition in Central Asia. Handpicked by Haslund-Christensen to help solve “the complicated Asiatic cultural problems” as part of a cross-disciplinary team participating in the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia, Siiger belongs to an exclusive group of scientists, who pushed the Danish scientific and museum enterprise forward in the 1940s. His partaking in the expedition of 1947-1950, however, was also of paramount importance for his own academic career. After returning from Asia as curator at the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen and from 1960 to 1979 as professor of the History of Religions at Aarhus University, he repeatedly returned to his fieldwork material from the Kalasha in NW Pakistan, the Lepcha in Sikkim and the Bodos in Assam, India – even long after his retirement in 1979. Until his death in 1999, he took care of the material he had collected in the late 1940s and organized it for future research, as Svend Castenfeldt has described in his chapter. This work was not out of vanity; on the contrary, Siiger was not satisfied with some of the research material he had collected.

As Siiger’s bibliography reveals, his Lepcha material is clearly the best published: two volumes entitled *The Lepchas: Culture and Religion of a Himalayan People* were published in 1967, but the third, concluding, volume never finished in his lifetime. Fortunately, Heleen Plaisier is working on this third conclusive

volume. The Kalasha material can only be regarded as partially published and only in the form of articles, courses and his “Preliminary Report” of 1956. Up to his death, Siiger worked on a comprehensive volume on the old Kalasha culture, which Svend Castenfeldt is attempting to complete based primarily on archival material. The Bodo materials are largely unpublished. A great deal of his material has been lodged in the archives, but Peter B. Andersen and Santosh K. Soren, fortunately, have recently published Siiger’s manuscript on the Bodo in *The Bodo of Assam: Revisiting a Classical Study from 1950* (Copenhagen 2015).

Although substantial portions of Siiger’s research material never were published in his lifetime, this collection of essays clearly shows that his legacy is very much alive. Some of the contributors to this collection do not work directly with Siiger’s materials but rather with questions that can throw light on Siiger’s work either thematically or regionally. In the contributions by those who have used Siiger’s materials in their research, one finds openings which could be relevant to, or used in, further research. International scholarship, therefore, is carrying on with many of the research challenges and issues which Siiger himself faced and/or defined. Hopefully, means and possibilities will be found to assure that this scholarship finds a suitable conclusion. The results of Siiger’s research can then properly become a foundation for future endeavor.

Members of the ethnic groups studied by Siiger, are becoming increasingly aware of and interested in the material he collected more than 60 years ago. Substantial amounts of what he collected then are currently considered cultural heritage and documentation of past life forms, which have now changed to varying degrees. As shown in the chapters by Jan Heegaard and Taj Khan Kalash, and Charisma K. Lepcha and Davide Torri, knowledge of the past in the form of objects, photos, and knowledge about religion, cosmology and cultural traditions can be very important tools for ethnic groups in their efforts of raising cultural self-consciousness and in the political struggle for cultural, social and religious rights. Many fieldworkers develop sympathies and personal ties during fieldwork, but although the main purpose of the expedition that Siiger took part in was to collect objects and knowledge for Danish institutions and research, the fact that this very same material appears to be a valuable asset to the communities that he studied then is a spin-off that Siiger surely would have welcomed and appreciated.

Seen in the perspective of the history of expeditions, it becomes obvious that Siiger had moved from the survey approach of Olufsen to long-termed, in depth studies of environments in order to gain a comprehensive study of cultures as

a whole, as stressed in Plaisier’s chapter. Siiger’s aim was to document his collections in detail. Thus, when working with his material collections now in the storerooms of museums, the excellent documentation is greatly admired by contemporary curators.

A life’s work does not allow itself to be condensed into a single volume. Our hope is that readers nevertheless will see and accept this collection of perspectives on Siiger, his life and work and Danish research in Central Asia as more than a mere handful of perspectives in their own right, but which also reflects the essence of something far greater than what is presented here. For many, Halfdan Siiger has become a forefather on whose shoulders we stand in order to carry our research forward.

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Beside this list of publications Siiger published many texts in Danish; in 1937 and 1938 with two texts on the burial practices found among “primitive” people in Australia, the Pacific area, and North and South America. Two shorter texts from 1946 deal with North American Indians.

From 1948 until 1954, during and after the 3rd Danish Central Asian Expedition, Siiger wrote 18 shorter features for Danish newspapers. In the 1950's, working at the National Museum of Denmark, Siiger produced several shorter texts on Asian objects in the collections for a large volume on the museum. All in all, 46

texts in Danish, most of them shorter articles for periodicals, and 20 texts in English, including Siiger's professional publications, i.e. books, lectures abroad, etc.

Important to note is how Siiger identified himself as a professional researcher: The first of his early texts: *Indianerne og Bisonen* (The Indians and the Bisons) has the subtitle: *Træk af nordamerikansk Religions-Etnografi* (Outline of North-American Religio-Ethnography). This was not just a declaration; to the end of his working years, Siiger identified himself as a religio-ethnographer.



Om min far, Halfdan

Original Danish version of "About My Father, Halfdan"

Nina Siiger

Min far var en meget beskednen mand, og han ville være dybt overrasket over, at det han arbejdede med og de tanker han gjorde sig, har betydet så meget for så mange forskere i dag. Jeg vil i det følgende løfte sløret for en flig af hans liv.

Livet i Øster Søgade

Jeg hedder Nina Siiger, og er min fars ældste barn. Jeg er født i 1943, og mine søskende, der er tvillinger, er født i 1947. Mine forældre boede i Øster Søgade i København ud til søerne i en lille lejlighed, da de blev gift og fik mig. Det var under krigen, og da det var koldt og mørkt, hentede far koks i kælderen til os og til nogle enlige damer, der boede over os. Der var en livlig trafik op ned af trapperne, fordi man ikke rigtig kunne gå ud, og jeg kan huske, at der var skyderier i gaderne. En dag lå vi på gulvet, og der satte sig et projektil i væggen.

Min far var så god til at lytte til os, og han nød at sidde ved bordet med et forklæde på eller sidde i en god stol og læse og bladre i bøger. Jeg kravlede på stoleryggen og redte hans mørke og lidt tynde hår, og jeg husker hans store, varme og lidt knoglede hånd. Det var trygt.

Om sommeren når vi var i Søndervig hos mine bedsteforældre på vestkysten, kom han kun kort, for han skulle tjene penge. Men når han endelig var der, legede han trold, der kom farende ned fra klitterne for at fange os. Vi fór rundt og blev dejligt bange. Han var rigtig god til at digte historier om lygtepælenes land og andre mærkelige ting. Vi fik breve om alt det, der skete i København; der vandrede for eksempel krokodiller rundt. De boede i søen, men tog sig også en tur på Strøget.

Der var også skønne beskrivelser af moden om sommeren. Vi var noget forargede over det vrøvl, han skrev. Han fortalte også de dejligste historier, når vi skulle i seng eller juleaften mens vi sad i mørket og ventede på, at døren skulle åbnes til juletræet.

Fars opvækst og uddannelse

Min far var den ældste af fire søskende, og de yngste var enæggede tvillinger. Preben ville gerne male og gik på malerskole på Charlottenborg. Min farfar syntes det var noget pjat, og at det kunne man ikke leve af og så videre, men far kæmpede for ham og Preben fik lov til at vælge denne karriere, der blev hans liv.

Far var et meget følsomt barn, der gjorde alt for at hans forældre skulle være tilfredse med ham. Han fortalte, at han en gang han var omkring 8 år spurgte sin far: "Hvad ønsker du af mig?". Svaret var: "At du er dygtig og lydig". Og det var han så. Endda meget dygtig i skolen; han læste lektier i et lille koldt og uopvarmet værelse, for han flyttede først hjemmefra, da han kom på kollegium.

Min far var blevet tvunget til at blive teolog, for min farfar ville have at der skulle være en præst i familien. Han gik på Metropolitanskolen, og jeg tror, at rektor var hjemme hos min farfar for at spørge, om Halfdan ikke måtte blive matematiker, for det havde han så glimrende evner for. Nej, kan skulle være gammelsproglig, så det blev han, og heldigvis rigtig glad for det senere hen. Den slags kan ikke lade sig gøre i dag.

Min far fik sin kandidatgrad i teologi i 1936 og blev i 1942 magister i religionshistorie. Han måtte tage forskellige jobs selvom de alligevel ikke gav ret meget. Min mor skriver i sin dagbog, at krigen var slem men fattigdommen værre. Det var en af grundene til, at der var glæde over, at han kom med på ekspeditionen. Der betød nemlig en stilling til ham som museumsinspektør på Nationalmuseet, når de kom tilbage, og det løste mange spekulationer.

Ekspeditionen

Udrejsen til Citral

Da Haslund-Christensens ekspedition i 1947 endelig var på plads, var der gået mange nervepirrende måneder forud. De havde fået penge fra blandt andre Prins Axel og til allersidst Carlsberg, og den endelige positive afgørelse blev truffet i Eksekutiv-komiteén for ekspeditionen. Min far tegnede en livsforsikring for død på 5.000 kr., for invaliditet 10.000 kr, for børnelammelse, 15% og for børns død 400kr. Det kostede os en årlig ydelse på 28,50 kr. pr. år, hvilket dengang var et svimlende beløb.

Da min far rejste, var jeg 4 1/2 år og tvillingerne var 2 måneder.

Der kom mange rejsebrev. De første er fra Tyskland om hvor udbombet, der var. I toget var der vogne, hvor de såkaldte "american girls" opholdt sig med chokolade, parfume og drinks. Han skrev om mærkelige fysiognomier; nogle havde snu og snedige øjne andre med flade nakker. (Jeg nævner dette, da var en del af arbejdet i felten var at måle hoveder, selv om far ikke var sikker på det gav nogen viden). Han var så omhyggelig, at der næsten kom brev hver 14. dag. De er alle nummererede med modtager og afsender dato på konvolutten. Hvis far var langt ude i felten, betalte han en løber til den nærmeste station, hvor man kunne sende det videre.

Han rejste fra Antwerpen med skibet "Malaga". Vi blev i Holstebro hos mine bedsteforældre, der var tandlæger, og hvor der var meget hjælp at få for min mor. Det var kort efter krigen, og pengene var små.

Der er et brev fra Bombay, hvorfra han skal videre til Peshawar hvor han skriver: "Jeg savner nordiske kvinder omkring mig og det danske sprog. Jeg og mine rejsefæller har det vældigt hyggelig og rart sammen, men blandt mænd er det enten saglighed eller bastant humor. Først mellem mand og kvinde opstår den levende samtale, hvor man ikke blot taler med hjerne og ord, men med hjerte og sind".

Opholdet i Chitral

Vi fik mange breve – langt over 200. Han beskriver, hvad de oplever, og det kæmpe arbejde det er at aflægge visitter for tilladelser med stempler og guldemblemer plus breve til fyrsten af Chitral og andre officielle personer. Men det bedste var brevene hjemmefra med krone på. De åbnede døre.

Han savner sin Bolette og deres måde at samtale på, der var helt deres egen. De kom rundt om det hele menneske i deres bedømmelse. "Jeg føler mig fri og uhindret over for dig; over for andre står jeg med en ængstelig tvivl, om at de vil misforstå, hvad jeg siger.[...] PS. Jeg er ked af, at folk går og fortæller dig, at jeg såmænd går i seng med læs af brune piger. Det er grebet ud af luften. Jeg kan forsikre dig, at siden jeg har forladt dig, har jeg ikke været i seng med nogen kvinde eller fået et kys. Hvis folk vidste, hvad en ekspedition vil sige. Her i Østen er man enten indarbejdet med indflydelsesrige mennesker eller også er man ingenting og kan ingenting opnå. Der er meget få, der får lov til at rejse op til Chitral-præsten i missionen; at jeg har fået lov, skyldes først og fremmest at jeg skriver på brevpapir med krone på. Det er et magisk tryllemiddel. Ikke at jeg

er museumsmand eller videnskabsmand eller religionsforsker. Nej – jeg er først og sidst kongeligt sendebud”.

Far sagde tit, at han først blev voksen på ekspeditionen. Han fortalte blandt andet, at han efter en lang vandring med tolk og bærere kom til en flod, der lå mange hundrede meter nede i en kløft, hvor en smal hængebro over var den eneste overgang. De gjorde holdt, og der var ingen anden vej; ellers skulle de vandre langs floden og de ville miste ihvertfald en dagsrejse. Han indså, at de måtte krydse den, selv om den var i dårlig stand og min far havde højdeskræk. Men der var ikke andet at gøre. Bærerne ville ellers miste tillid til ham og forlade ham, så han gik over, og han huskede hvordan det brusede under ham, han så ikke ned. Broen gyngede. Han holdt vejret, og bærerne med oppakning gik over efter ham. Han måtte lægge sig ned, da de var kommet over, men han følte samtidig, at han havde over vundet sin skræk.

Metaren, det vil sige fyrsten, gav far en tjener, som skulle hjælpe med indkøb af klædedragter til Nationalmuseet. Det viste sig, at han lavede en storslået sortbørshandel, hvor han truede de indfødte til at sælge dyrt, så han kunne få provision selv. Heldigvis opdagede far det, og han fik købt fine ting som for eksempel kvindehovedtøjer. Men mange var så fattige, at de gik i tøj de selv havde syet sammen af sække.

Folk i Chitral havde svært ved at forstå hvad min far ville derude: Er det jagt? Nej han har ingen bøsse. Er det politik, han interesserer sig? Tilsyneladende ikke. Er det kvinder? Nej, han sidder og taler med de gamle mænd. Men de ved, hvad han er, og hvad han vil. Her var en hvid mand, som ikke interesserede sig for den muslimske herskende klasse, og det gav respekt så de hjalp ham med at købe ting og skaffe ham lokale beboere til registrering af antropologiske måleskemaer.

Fars ihærdighed med at skrive betød, at min mor fik breve hver 14 dag – indimellem oftere. Og nogle gange kom der bundter. Brevene er meget ømme og søde, og de fortæller, hvor meget han savner hende og os. Han udpensler malende, hvordan det må være at være hjemme hos os. Det er især omkring juletid og sommerferie. En gang var far i Mardan i juli, det var 36 til 42 graders varme, og det var hårdt at vente på monsunen. Han beundrede pastor Christensen, der kunne holde ud at være derude i flere år. Menneskene ville kede far forfærdeligt, for der var ikke nogen interessante samtalepartnere, og klimaet var for hårdt

Min mor skriver i et brev til far, at hun har ondt af ham, fordi han har været ensom så længe. Men han skriver: “Det har haft en positiv virkning: jeg har fået

samling på en masse tanker, fordi jeg har været henvist til mit indre liv og fået klargjort de vigtigst principielle synspunkter af religionshistorisk og filosofisk art. Jeg har fået lagt et fundament til mine helt egne tanker og mit helt eget grundlag for problemernes forståelse.”

I 1949 skriver han hjem: “Jeg har to gange banet mig vej gennem junglen af små stier. Nu sidste gang fulgt 20 kulier i tre-fire meter højt jungle-græs, der skjulte os helt. Jeg har besøgt flere ensomme klostre, men vil sandsynligvis ikke gå i kloster, da det er min opfattelse – som også deles af Sikkims premierminster – at jeg ikke vil få meget udbytte af det. Alt i klostrene går på rutine. Lærdommen står lavt. De fleste munke kan hverken læse eller skrive”. Så klosterplanen er opgivet, men mor måtte ikke fortælle det til nogen, særlig ikke til journalister, det var godt stof at ekspeditionen ikke havde vanskeligheder. Min mor skal sige, at de er i gang med lepchaere og først skal være færdige der. Far skriver, at han er ked af ikke kunne skrive noget spændende og dramatisk; det meste dramatik går med en konstant kamp for at forhindre at han bliver snydt for penge.

Efter ekspeditionen

Museer og ballet

Vi gik meget på museer, for han havde fri adgang. Det var ikke så kedeligt, for han kunne altid fortælle gode historier. Kun var vi dybt uenige om Titians Renaissance-kvinder. Far kunne lide de hvide fede kvinder. Han synes også balletpiger var for tynde. For ham var det en skuffelse, når man kunne tælle deres ribben.

Far holdt meget af kunst. Han ville så gerne have haft råd til at købe lidt mere kunst fra de forskellige områder været i, men som han senere sagde, så var der ingen der kunne sige, at han købte de bedste til sig selv. Han elskede porcelæner, så han besøgte flittigt Davids-samlingen, da han kom til København. Han gik i skole med maleren Ejer Bille, som var rigtig dårlig i skolen. Far vidste, at han ville blive en stor maler, og rektor sagde også, at hvis Bille ikke blive student, så var det ikke Bille der var noget galt med, men skolen.

Da jeg kom på balletskolen på teateret trænede jeg far som partner. Vi så alle balletterne, og når jeg kom hjem, hersede jeg med ham: Du skal gøre sådan og løfte mig på den måde. Det havde vi meget sjov af.

Fars temperament

Min far var også konfliktløser i familien. Min mors familie, Tronhjemmerne, var meget temperamentsfulde, og der var mange konflikter, som min mor havde svært ved at klare. Halfdan var rolig og omhyggelig, og de havde respekt for ham. Alle spurgte Halfdan. Hvad de ikke vidste, var, at han stod på badeværelset og trampede og skar tænder, så vi børn blev helt forskrækkede. Jeg spurgte min mor hvorfor, og hun svarede, at raseriet over hans tyranniske far tog på ham. Det var aldrig godt nok! Tænk engang langt ude i Himalayas bjerge fik han en løber til det nærmeste by, som afleverede et telegram som gik til København til en blomsterhandler, der afleverede en buket til hans forældres bryllupsdag. Han var så indoktrineret, at det var helt naturligt. Det er ikke underligt, at der behøvedes en ekspedition til at gøre ham fri.

Alderdom

Jeg kan huske, at jeg engang spurgte en terapeut: hvor meget initiativ må man tage i en familie? Alt det du vil, bare du ikke tager det fra andre, var svaret. Som barn og ung fik min far aldrig lov til at bestemme noget som helst. Han skulle være lydig og dygtig, så han brugte al energi på det. Men ekspeditionen gjorde ham som sagt til mand, og indtil sin død da han var 89 år gammel, bevarede han sin interesse for kultur og religion. Vi havde masser af gode samtaler herom lige til det sidste. Han beholdt også et åbent sind og elskede at tale med unge mennesker, både for at lytte og for at fortælle.

As a historian of religion Halfdan Siiger participated in the 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia (1947-50) under the leadership of the Danish explorer Henning Haslund-Christensen. Working with some of the “complicated Asiatic cultural problems”, Siiger conducted fieldwork among three different ethnic groups in Asia: the Kalasha in Pakistan, the Lepcha in Sikkim and the Bodo in India. Siiger’s work has informed and inspired a number of contemporary scholars of different academic disciplines. This publication presents a collection of perspectives on Siiger, his life, his work and Danish research in Central Asia.